OSAMU TEZUKA

# Barbara

バラバラ

PARENTAL ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT
MATURE READERS

# Barbara ばるばら

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## Osamu Tezuka's *Barbara*

In 1973, Osamu Tezuka was still best known as Japan's most famous children's manga and anime artist. Several years earlier, however, he had thrown down the gauntlet to his younger contemporaries and challengers, who were creating manga for more mature readers. He would compete with the best of them head on, pushing the envelope of expression.

Tezuka was forty-five years old when he started drawing *Barbara*, and he had already been drawing manga for nearly thirty years. *Big Comic*, where the story was serialized between July 10, 1973 and May 25, 1974, was a refreshingly and new bi-weekly manga magazine, with a mainstream readership of mostly young adult men. It gave Tezuka a forum to develop stories with more mature themes and characters. In the same magazine, he had already finished serializing *Swallowing the Earth*, *Ayako*, and *An Ode to Kirihito*. While much shorter than many of his long arc dramas, which run to thousands of pages, *Barbara* still registers around 450.

It was a turbulent time for Tezuka and Japanese society in general. Tezuka was losing popularity to many talented, younger manga artists, especially the more action-oriented *gekiga* artists, who were grabbing readers' attention with more graphic scenes of violence and sex. But while competing with them, he was at the same time also struggling to preserve his reputation as Japan's premier children's manga artist and animator. He had entered something of a slump in the children's manga market, which he did not break out of until that year, 1973, when he began his *Black Jack* series, about an outlaw physician, and re establish his popularity. In animation, he was already a national hero for the work done ten years earlier by his company, Mushi Pro, which had produced Japan's first thirty-minute TV anime series, *Astro Boy*, and gone on to create many other famous commercial, as well as experimental and even adult and erotic works. But in 1973, Mushi Pro plunged into bankruptcy, leaving Tezuka deeply in debt. Yet Tezuka was always a super-productive, highly competitive individual, with

remarkable resilience. Even during this period he kept simultaneously working on multiple manga stories, serializing them in manga magazines for both children and adults, making his usual media appearances, and writing occasional articles and opinion pieces for magazines and newspapers. And he managed to finish *Barbara* and, shelving his frequent self abnegation, feel proud of the result.

Japan was itself in a bit of a dark period. After years of political upheaval, and vast protests in the streets against the U.S. Japan Security Treaty, the student movement had gone into a retrenchment. Leftist groups had turned upon each other, and radicals on the political fringe had gone off the ideological cliff, members of the infamous Red Army faction murdering each other and fleeing to North Korea and the Middle East. Political scandals in the government were also rife, and disgust with politics had reached a new height. It was a time, among the once idealistic younger generation (the new manga generation), of turning inward, and of new cynicism and apathy. It is no coincidence that the word *shirake*–which literally means to fade, or turn white–became a popular adjective used to describe this generation.

At its core, *Barbara* is a surreal tale of a young novelist, Yosuke Mikura, who is both accompanied and haunted by a type of muse (Barbara). In the afterword that Tezuka wrote to his work, he describes it as simply "the story of a man caught between the decadent-ism of art and madness." But of course, as was always true of Tezuka, it was far more than that.

Tezuka was a highly educated man (and a licensed physician) and the comments he wrote in an afterword to *Barbara* reveal the depth of his intellect. The original title of his story in Japanese was actually not *Barbara* (which would have been rendered phonetically as *Baabara*), but *Barubora*. Tezuka says that he chose this name on a bit of a whim, and admits that it does sound a tad odd, even in Japanese. Yet he had his own logic. He thought that "Barubora" sounded as though it might (or might not) have been the name of one of the daughters of Mnemosyne (in Greek mythology the mother of the nine muses sired by Zeus, and in Tezuka's

story the oddly Paleolithic-looking mother of Barbara). As for his actual inspiration in creating such a wild story about creativity and muses, with all of its twists and turns, he says he was inspired by Jacques Offenbach's opera, *The Tales of Hoffman*, which features a character who is the darling of society but a notoriously fickle romantic, tormented by his love affairs and the machinations of a mysterious muse. That Tezuka would draw his inspiration from such a lofty, high-brow source should come as no surprise. He was himself a skilled classical pianist and he loved to listen to classical music while drawing, often deriving many of his best ideas from it.

In the story that resulted, readers will find few of the off-the-wall gags often associated with Tezuka's stories for children. There are no patched up gourds flying through the air and bouncing off the ground, nor any odd, comical characters who suddenly appear and make nonsensical announcements during overly serious sequences. There is nothing here to deliberately wreak havoc with the story line and frustrate uninitiated adult readers. What we have is a straight forward narrative (with the wild gyrations that Tezuka always loved) set in a serious, disturbed, adult world. In this world, Yosuke Mikura and his muse, the mysterious Barbara, become vehicles for Tezuka to explore issues of artistic creativity, fame, sanity, and the fickleness of fate.

*Barbara* is largely set in Tokyo, the capital of Japan, amid the intellectual life that existed there when Tezuka wrote the story. It was a time before the total *manga*-nization of the Japanese mind, when many university students still read serious literature voraciously. Collections of translated world classics sold well, and young intellectuals could often discuss Marx, Herman Hesse, and Friedrich Nietzsche, in addition to Baudelaire, Picasso, Manet, Tolstoi, Pushkin, Cocteau, Kafka, Mishima, and Kawabata (all of whom are mentioned in the story). As Tezuka notes in his afterword, there was also a mini-boom in interest in the occult and in black magic in the same period.

In today's Tokyo, Shibuya is the trend-setting area, where fashion pates and

hipsters strut and play. In 1973-4, however, the center of youth culture was Shinjuku, where Tezuka sets much of *Barbara*. Shinjuku, with its crowded dens of bars and coffee shops, was where writers and artists and both pseudo- and real intellectuals often gathered. And it was also a center for remnants of Japan's disillusioned and exhausted quasi-hippy culture–the unemployed and vagrant *fūten* mentioned in the story, to which Barbara belonged, members of which could often be seen reeling on the streets and in the undergrounds, intoxicated, either from drinking alcohol or inhaling paint thinner.

For anyone who has studied Japanese literature, or lived in the Japan of this period, *Barbara* is particularly fun to read, and not just because it reveals Tezuka's fecund powers of imagination. It also shows the mental milieu of the time. The status of novelists, it is fair to say, was then considerably higher than it is today. They were then taken quite seriously, and many strived to be serious. The *shishōsetsu*, or deeply introspective "I-novel" was still popular, and so, too, were newer genres, such as science fiction. Yosuke Mikura, the protagonist and novelist of *Barbara*, is a fictional character, but his environment is completely believable. Characters around him, including Barbara, quote passages from writers popular at the time. The flared bell-bottomed trousers of the women; the crowded literary award ceremonies; the rivalries among writers; and the drinking in Shinjuku bars late at night–all these things ring true.

Tezuka, while technically an outsider in the literary world because of his unique status as a manga artist, was intimately familiar with it. He often made appearances at parties of notables, and he personally knew many famous writers. In fact, in *Barbara*, many of the Japanese writers named–such as Kōbō Abe, Shūsaku Endō, Sakyō Komatsu–are real figures. I still remember once being taken to a bar by Tezuka and meeting Sakyō Komatsu, the prolific and famous science fiction author known especially for the popular disaster novel, *Nihon Chinbotsu* (which was made into multiple films and translated into English as *Japan Sinks*). Komatsu had aspired to be a manga artist in his youth, and had once had several manga stories published. He was a good friend of Tezuka, who was,

conversely, himself a dues-paying member of the "Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of Japan" society, to which Komatsu also belonged.

For readers of traditional mainstream American comics, some aspects of *Barbara* may be shocking. I personally suspect that the most disturbing sections to modern readers are not Tezuka's depictions of nudity, bestiality, and assorted human perversions and madness. Nor are most readers likely to be too bothered by out of date ethnic stereotyping; as with all Tezuka works published today, this one comes in Japan with a disclaimer cautioning readers that, while Tezuka adamantly believed in the equality of all peoples, he was a product of his times, and his drawing styles might offend some minorities today. On the contrary, I suspect that in *Barbara*, most North American readers are likely to be more shocked by Tezuka's depiction of the violence Mikura inflicts on Barbara, and the relentless portrait of her appalling gutter level drunkenness and self-degradation.

*Barbara* is of course fiction, and it is a manga. Drinking alcohol in Japan, it is probably safe to say, is a far more integral part of socializing and doing business than in many other countries (especially for men) and it is not uncommon in the media to see humorous, almost endearing portraits of drunken people–who are also more tolerated in public than in many other societies. Nonetheless, Barbara's level of addiction is clearly off-the-charts. And the story is also set in a very different era, when women had far lower status than today, and occasional reports of wife-beating by famous politicians scarcely raised eyebrows among the public. As for the protagonist, Mikura, it is important to remember that in *Barbara* Tezuka is emulating the greats of literature, who insert us into the minds of largely unsympathetic characters, who may also speak in the first person. In other words, Tezuka avoids overt value judgments about his disturbed protagonist. He is merely depicting what Mikura doing and thinking, and allowing us to form our own opinions. And in this sense, Mikura–with his sexual fetishes and flaws and psychological problems–is more like a character out of a Dostoyevsky novel.

*Barbara* is not an easy story to render in English. This is not only because of the literary references, but because of the intricacies of the Japanese language and the near-impossibility of translating the unique speech of Mikura's muse. Barbara speaks with the Tokyo street slang of the time, but she also uses male Japanese speech patterns, which are radically different from female ones. This inversion of speech patterns cleverly amplifies our puzzlement over her odd character that seems real, but may not be, and floats in and out of Mikura's world, aiding and tormenting him at the same time.

Finally, for those who miss Tezuka's often wacky gags and sense of humor, look carefully in *Barbara* and you'll occasionally find it, even in otherwise serious sections. Tezuka was an amateur entomologist, and his first name, Osamu, is usually written in Japanese characters as a visual pun on the word *osamushi*, a ground beetle in the *carabidae* family. In the first panel of the third chapter, note the neon signs stacked high, advertising tiny bars in crowded, downtown Shinjuku.

Kudos again to Digital Manga Publishing, for making available another of Tezuka's earlier, more experimental adult works.

Frederik L. Schodt is the author of *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*; *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga*; and *The Astro Boy Essays: Osamu Tezuka, Mighty Atom, and the Manga/Anime Revolution.* He has translated numerous manga works by Tezuka, and in the past he occasionally served as Tezuka's interpreter. In 2009 he received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, for helping to promote Japanese popular culture in North America.

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# Barbara
# ばるぼら


CHP 1 — 007 — The Department Store Woman
CHP 2 — 027 — The Woman And The Dog
CHP 3 — 047 — The Black Plaza
CHP 4 — 067 — The Secret
CHP 5 — 087 — The Demon on the Dune
CHP 6 — 107 — The Black Sinner
CHP 7 — 147 — Chain the Wolf Down
CHP 8 — 167 — The Replica
CHP 9 — 187 — A World of Madness
CHP 10 — 207 — Voodoo
CHP 11 — 257 — The Black Mass
CHP 12 — 295 — Return
CHP 13 — 339 — Verdict
CHP 14 — 381 — Pathos in the Mist
CHP 15 — 411 — Ever After

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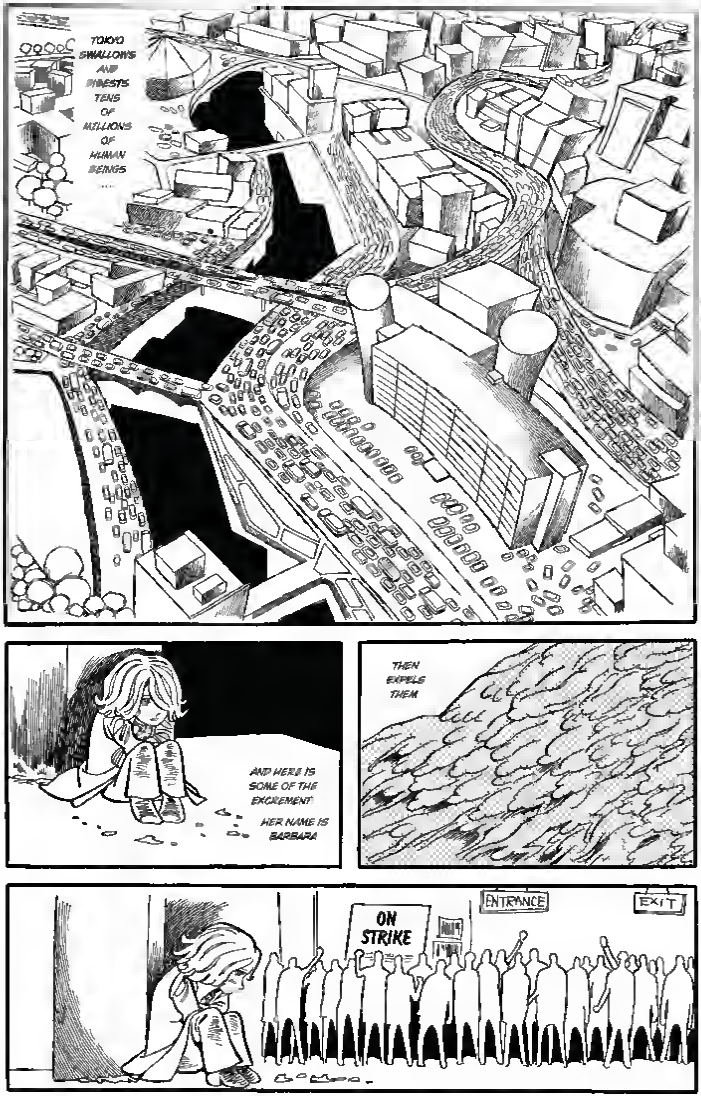
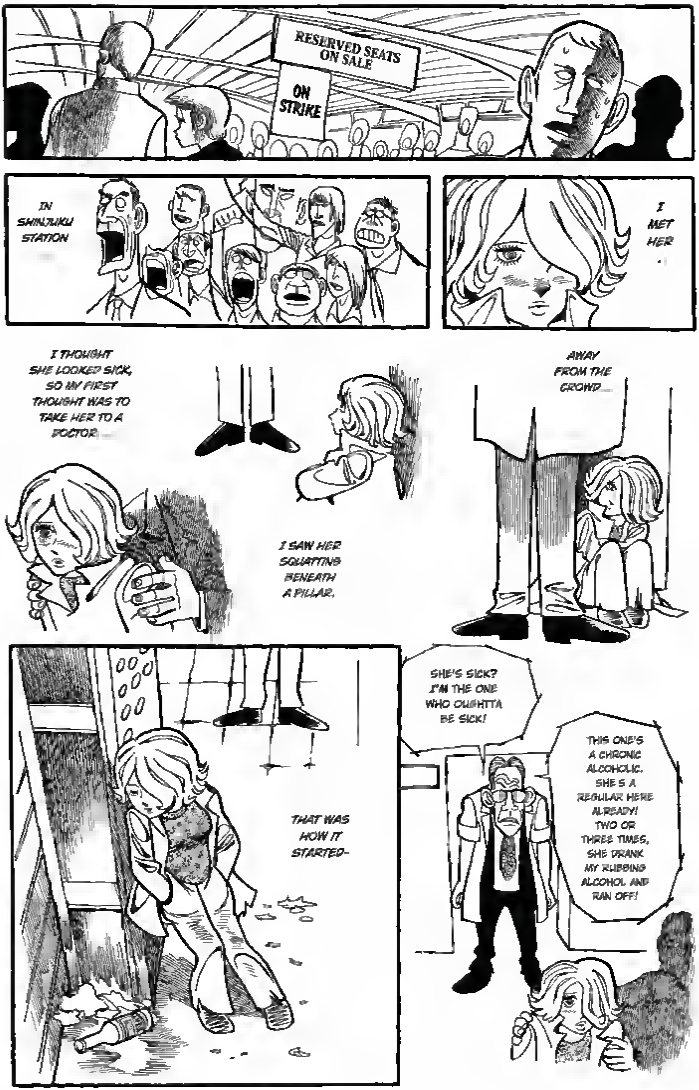
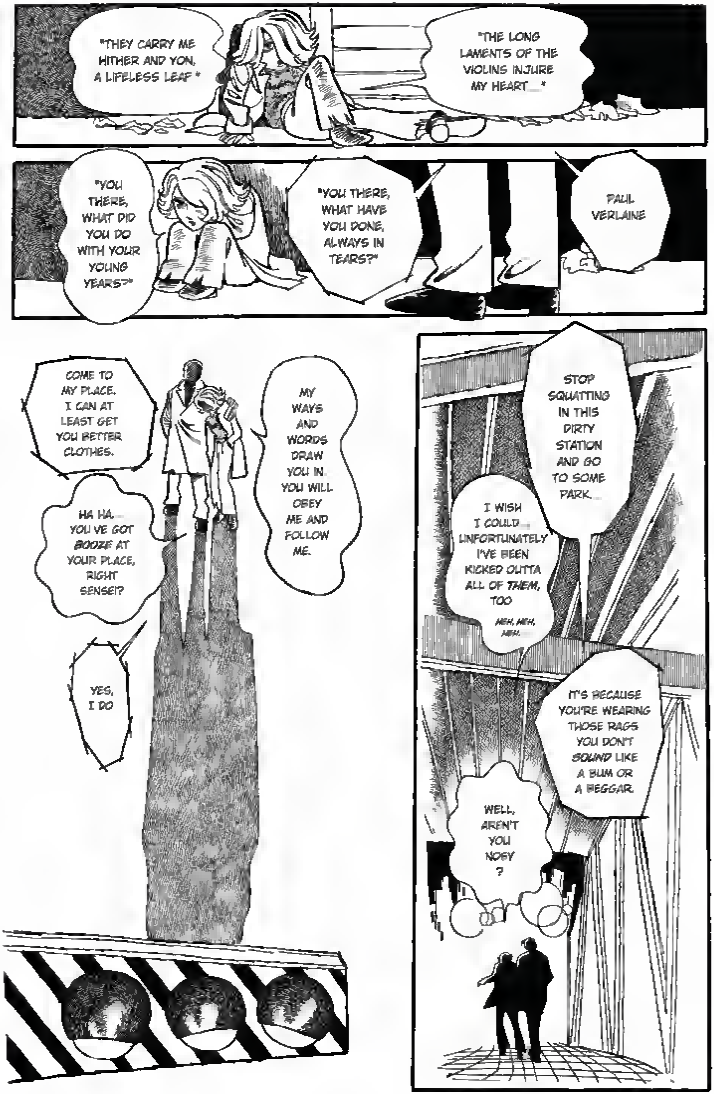
# Barbara ばるばら

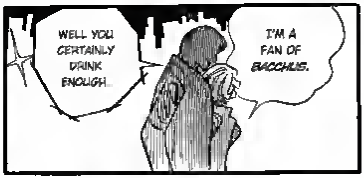
CHAPTER ONE.
## THE DEPARTMENT STORE WOMAN

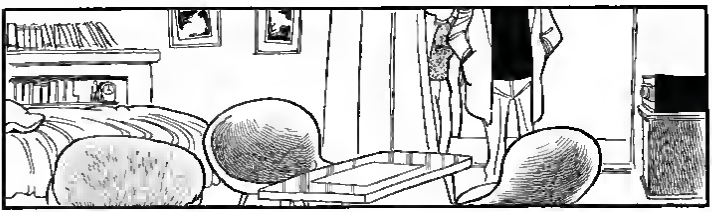

TOKYO SWALLOWS AND DIGESTS TENS OF MILLIONS OF HUMAN BEINGS .....
AND HERE IS SOME OF THE EXCREMENT. HER NAME IS BARBARA
THEN EXPELS THEM
ON STRIKE
ENTRANCE
EXIT


RESERVED SEATS ON SALE
ON STRIKE
IN SHINJUKU STATION
I MET HER
I THOUGHT SHE LOOKED SICK, SO MY FIRST THOUGHT WAS TO TAKE HER TO A DOCTOR.
I SAW HER SQUATTING BENEATH A PILLAR.
AWAY FROM THE CROWD
THAT WAS HOW IT STARTED-
SHE'S SICK? I'M THE ONE WHO OUGHTTA BE SICK!
THIS ONE'S A CHRONIC ALCOHOLIC. SHE'S A REGULAR HERE ALREADY! TWO OR THREE TIMES, SHE DRANK MY RUBBING ALCOHOL AND RAN OFF!


"THEY CARRY ME HITHER AND YON, A LIFELESS LEAF."
"THE LONG LAMENTS OF THE VIOLINS INJURE MY HEART..."
"YOU THERE, WHAT DID YOU DO WITH YOUR YOUNG YEARS?"
"YOU THERE, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, ALWAYS IN TEARS?"
PAUL VERLAINE
COME TO MY PLACE. I CAN AT LEAST GET YOU BETTER CLOTHES.
MY WAYS AND WORDS DRAW YOU IN. YOU WILL OBEY ME AND FOLLOW ME.
HA HA... YOU'VE GOT *BOOZE* AT YOUR PLACE, RIGHT SENSEI?
YES, I DO
STOP SQUATTING IN THIS DIRTY STATION AND GO TO SOME PARK...
I WISH I COULD... UNFORTUNATELY I'VE BEEN KICKED OUTTA ALL OF *THEM*, TOO
*HEH, HEH, HEH.*
IT'S BECAUSE YOU'RE WEARING THOSE RAGS YOU DON'T *SOUND* LIKE A BUM OR A BEGGAR.
WELL, AREN'T YOU NOSY?

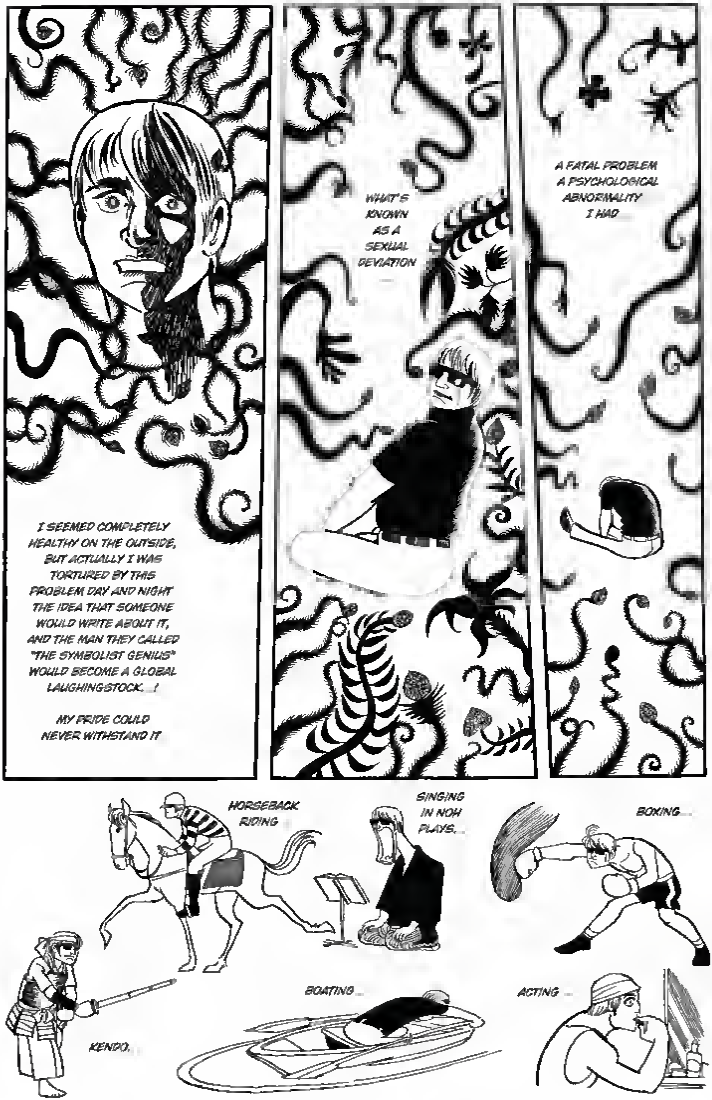
Sensei is a title used for doctors, teachers, writers or other respected persons.



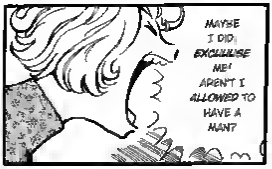
STOP THAT!
HOW MUCH WOULD ONE O' THESE SELL FOR?
YOU'RE REALLY RAKING IT IN! THIS PLACE IS SOMETHING ELSE
YOU CAN HAVE SOME LATER. TAKE A BATH FIRST!! YOU STINK!
OK IF I TEAR INTO THIS?
INTO THE BATH!
DRINKS COME FIRST.
HEY, YOU INVITED ME! I'M A GUEST!
I'M LEAVING!
HMPH! BEING A LITTLE FAMOUS DOESN'T MAKE YOU BETTER THAN ME
I DON'T NEED YOU!
ALL RIGHT, I'M GOING!
FINE, GO! GUESTS SHOULD HAVE MANNERS TOO, YOU KNOW.

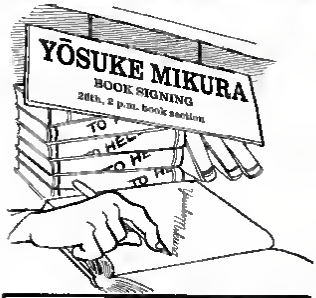
AND THE STRAY DOG IS SUDDENLY A PUSSYCAT.
I DIDN'T MEAN IT
FORGIVE ME, MISTER.
YOU CAN LEAVE YOUR CLOTHES IN THE WASHER.
HEY, YOU DON'T NEED ANY MORE
PUT IT BACK!
UNDRESS INSIDE, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
LIKE WHAT YOU SEE?
BUT I HAD
JOURNALISTS AND THE MASS MEDIA ARE ALWAYS WRITING ABOUT ME
I'M A POPULAR SYMBOLIST WRITER WHO'S CARVED OUT A UNIQUE PLACE IN THE LITERARY WORLD
MY WORK'S BEEN PUBLISHED OVERSEAS AND I HAVE MANY FANS
MY NAME IS YŌSUKE MIKURA

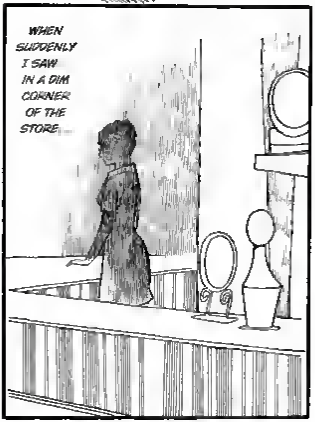

I SEEMED COMPLETELY HEALTHY ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT ACTUALLY I WAS TORTURED BY THIS PROBLEM DAY AND NIGHT
THE IDEA THAT SOMEONE WOULD WRITE ABOUT IT, AND THE MAN THEY CALLED "THE SYMBOLIST GENIUS" WOULD BECOME A GLOBAL LAUGHINGSTOCK...!
MY PRIDE COULD NEVER WITHSTAND IT
WHAT'S KNOWN AS A SEXUAL DEVIATION
A FATAL PROBLEM A PSYCHOLOGICAL ABNORMALITY I HAD
HORSEBACK RIDING
SINGING IN NOH PLAYS...
BOXING...
KENDO...
BOATING...
ACTING...

I TRIED TO CONQUER THEM.
I TRIED MY HAND AT MANY THINGS...
HI, SENSEI!
I'D LOVE TO MARRY SOMEONE LIKE THAT!
THE YŌSUKE MIKURA ?!
LOOK, IT'S YŌSUKE MIKURA!
DON'T LEAVE ME!
PLEASE CHOOSE ME.
MR. MIKURA
WE HAVE A PLAN TO PUBLISH YOUR COMPLETE WORKS. BY THE WAY, THIS IS MY DAUGHTER KANAKO.
MR. MIKURA, WON'T YOU TAKE SHIKAKO? I ASK YOU NOT AS SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE GONPACHIRO SATOMI, BUT AS A REGULAR FATHER...
THE HEAD OF KAI BOOKS THINKS HE'LL BE ABLE TO SELL MY WORK EXCLUSIVELY BY MAKING ME HIS SON-IN-LAW. AND IT'S OBVIOUS SATOMI IS TRYING TO DRAG ME INTO HIS RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN...

THAT BARBARA INSINUATED HERSELF
AND IT WAS INTO THIS SITUATION
KANAKO AND SHIKAKO WERE GOOD GIRLS. BUT I WAS COMPLETELY UNINTERESTED IN THEM.
S'OK, I DON'T WANT ANY
BARBARA, GO MAKE SOME TEA.
CAN'T YOU AT LEAST MAKE SOME DAMN TEA?
BARBARA! YOU TOOK THE PAY FOR THAT MANUSCRIPT OUT OF MY DESK DIDN'T YOU?
EW! ASSHOLE! PERVERT! SICKO! I'M ON THE TOILET!
YEP! I HAD A FEW BILLS TO PAY.
YOU SHOULD'VE WAITED UNTIL THE WATER BOILED!







THE SIGNING ENDED AND I WAS HEADING FOR THE ELEVATOR IN THE WOMEN'S CLOTHING SECTION...

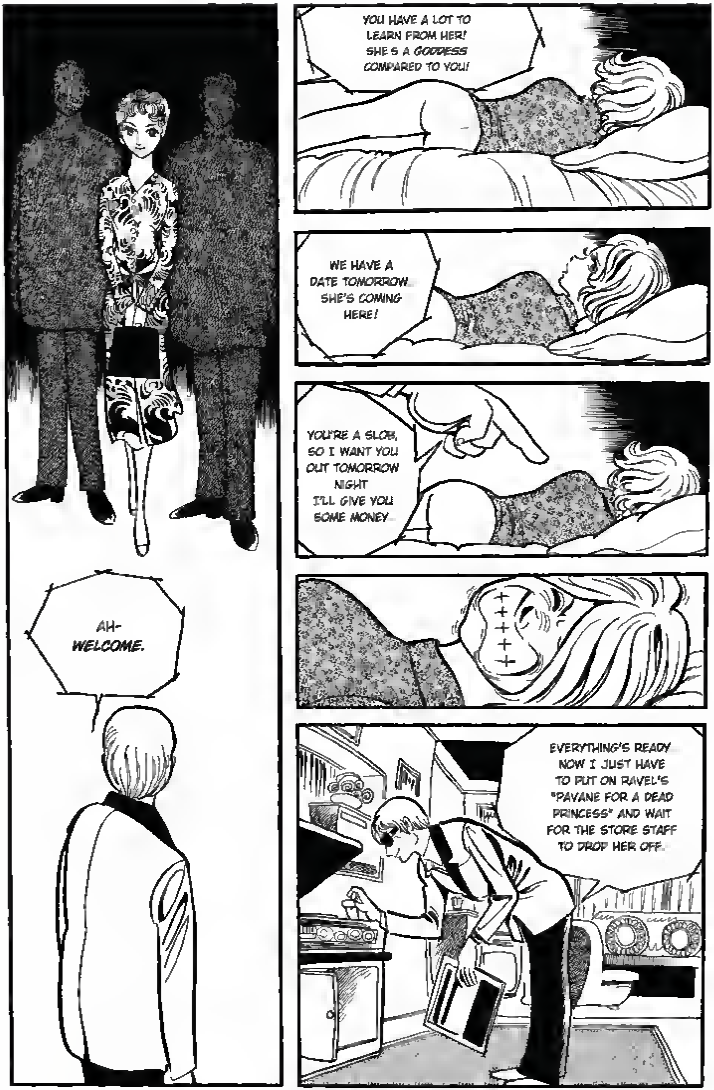
HOW ABOUT SOME TROUSERS?
UH... HM. SOMETHING FOR A LONG-LEGGED, BOYISH GIRL ABOUT 17 OR 18 YEARS OLD
CAN I HELP YOU?
THE WOMAN NOTICED AND SMILED SLIGHTLY
I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT THE CLOTHES.
PERHAPS SHE WILL LIKE THESE THEY ARE GAUCHO-STYLE, WITH CUFFS
THANK YOU VERY MUCH

YES, HELLO? GIVE ME THE SALES MANAGER...
HELLO THERE... I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHO WAS WORKING IN THE BACK OF THE WOMEN'S CLOTHING SECTION TODAY
NO... NO REASON. SHE DIDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE, I ONLY...
BARBARA! BOUGHT YOU A CHANGE OF CLOTHES
WHAT IS THIS MESS?!
BARBARA!
GONE AGAIN. TSK...
THE WOMAN'S GAZE WAS SCORCHING
SIR I BELIEVE THERE IS NO SALES DESK IN THAT LOCATION...
PLEASE HOLD A MOMENT...
A WOMAN WITH HER HAIR UP IN CURLS...
THERE IS NO ONE LIKE THAT IN OUR WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT...
I'M SORRY, BUT WHAT IS IT EXACTLY YOU ARE LOOKING FOR?

I CAN CHECK AGAIN, BUT I'M CERTAIN THERE IS NO SALES DESK THERE
NEVER MIND!
...
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE I BOUGHT SOMETHING FROM HER JUST TODAY!
PLEASE CHECK AGAIN
ARE YOU SURE YOU HAVEN'T CONFUSED US WITH ANOTHER STORE?
I DON'T SEE ANY PACKAGE!
DON'T BE STUPID!
IN THAT PACK-AGE
WHERE ARE THEY?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO DISAPPEAR, AT LEAST LOCK THE DOOR!
I BOUGHT YOU SOME PANTS
LITTLE THIEF! YOU MUST HAVE HIDDEN THEM SOMEWHERE.
I DIDN'T! I SWEAR!
I LEFT IT ON THE TABLE.
YOU MUST'A GIVEN 'EM TO SOME OTHER GIRL.
WOMEN'S DEPT.
I COULDN'T GET THE STRANGE INCIDENT OFF MY MIND, SO THE NEXT DAY I HEADED BACK TO THE DEPARTMENT STORE

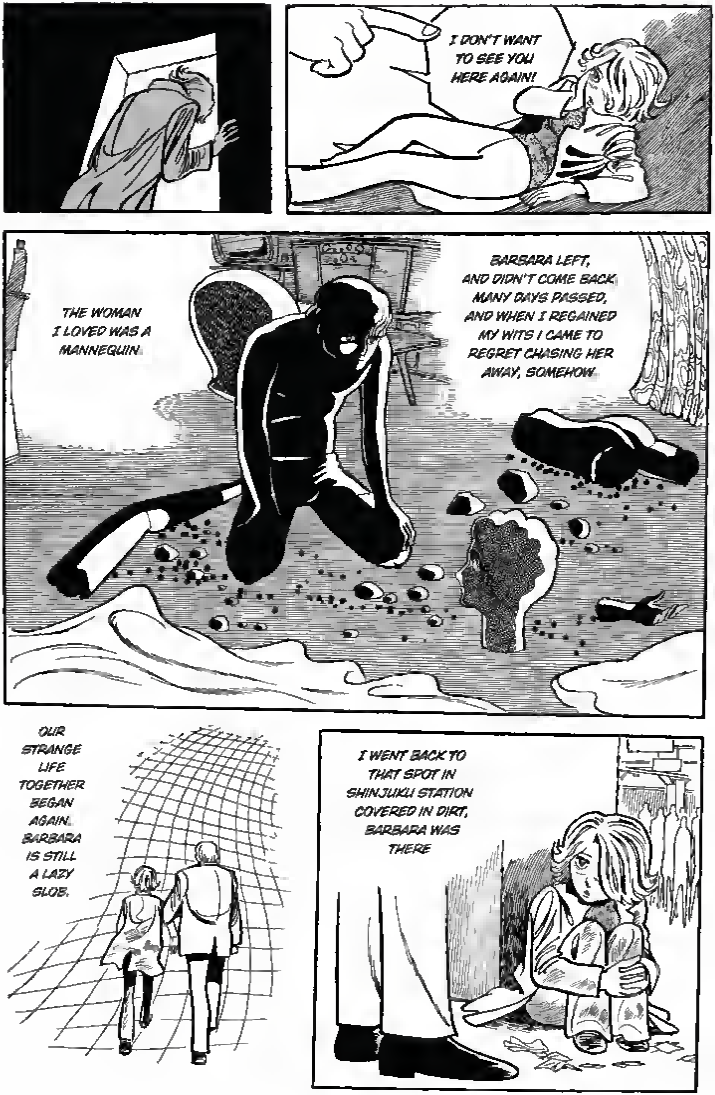
OH MY! HA HA HA...
BUT I'M HERE EVERY DAY!
YOU ARE HERE! THE SALES MANAGER SAID YOU DIDN'T EXIST!
OH, HELLO AGAIN!
THAT'S IT!
YOU FORGOT THIS YESTERDAY
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!
I CAME BACK BECAUSE... WELL, I SEEM TO HAVE LOST THE PACKAGE FROM YESTERDAY
SO
WOULD YOU TELL ME YOUR NAME?
THE MANAGER IS QUITE BUSY... I'M SURE HE SIMPLY MADE A MISTAKE.
THAT MANAGER... WHAT A CRUEL JOKE I'M GOING TO BRING HIM HERE AND SHOW HIM.
JUST CHATTING WITH HER MADE ME HAPPY. MY SOUL WAS WARMED BY THE HEAT OF LOVE, BURNING LIKE A STAR...
IT'S MANAME SUGATA.
AND YOU'RE ALWAYS HERE?

BARBARA! DID YOU BREAK THIS VASE?
BARBARA! I'VE GOT THAT PACKAGE!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
YOU'RE TOO DAMN LOUD I'M GONNA THROW UP!
SO YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD JUST GET DRUNK AND GO WILD?
NOT AGAIN... THERE'S NOTHING THERE, MAN
WHAT?
ON THE TABLE!
SO WHERE IS IT?
THIS IS HOW YOU THANK ME FOR GOING BACK FOR THAT PACKAGE...
THERE WASN'T EVEN A SALESMAN THERE!
GET A GRIP SENSE! WHAT WERE YOU DOING STANDING AROUND THERE, ANYWAY?
YOU WISH.
YOU WERE JEALOUS, WEREN'T YOU?
BARBARA.. YOU FOLLOWED ME!?


YOU HAVE A LOT TO LEARN FROM HER! SHE'S A GODDESS COMPARED TO YOU!
WE HAVE A DATE TOMORROW. SHE'S COMING HERE!
YOU'RE A SLOB, SO I WANT YOU OUT TOMORROW NIGHT. I'LL GIVE YOU SOME MONEY.
EVERYTHING'S READY. NOW I JUST HAVE TO PUT ON RAVEL'S "PAVANE FOR A DEAD PRINCESS" AND WAIT FOR THE STORE STAFF TO DROP HER OFF.
AH- WELCOME.

YOUR COMING PUSHES MY LOVE FOR YOU TO NEW HEIGHTS... NOW, COME CLOSE AND END MY SOLITUDE WITH YOUR EMBRACE...
—YET IF THAT WERE YOUR NAME...
YOU ARE NOT MANAME SUGATA. THAT NAME IS A LITTLE DEMON FROM SOME TINY FAR-OFF LAND...
AS YOU SAY.
I WOULD HAPPILY DESCEND INTO HELL WITH YOU...
ばさっ!!

BARBARA!!
YOU'RE DRUNK!
WHAH
UNGH


I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU HERE AGAIN!
THE WOMAN I LOVED WAS A MANNEQUIN.
BARBARA LEFT, AND DIDN'T COME BACK. MANY DAYS PASSED, AND WHEN I REGAINED MY WITS I CAME TO REGRET CHASING HER AWAY, SOMEHOW.
OUR STRANGE LIFE TOGETHER BEGAN AGAIN. BARBARA IS STILL A LAZY SLOB.
I WENT BACK TO THAT SPOT IN SHINJUKU STATION COVERED IN DIRT, BARBARA WAS THERE

# Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER TWO:

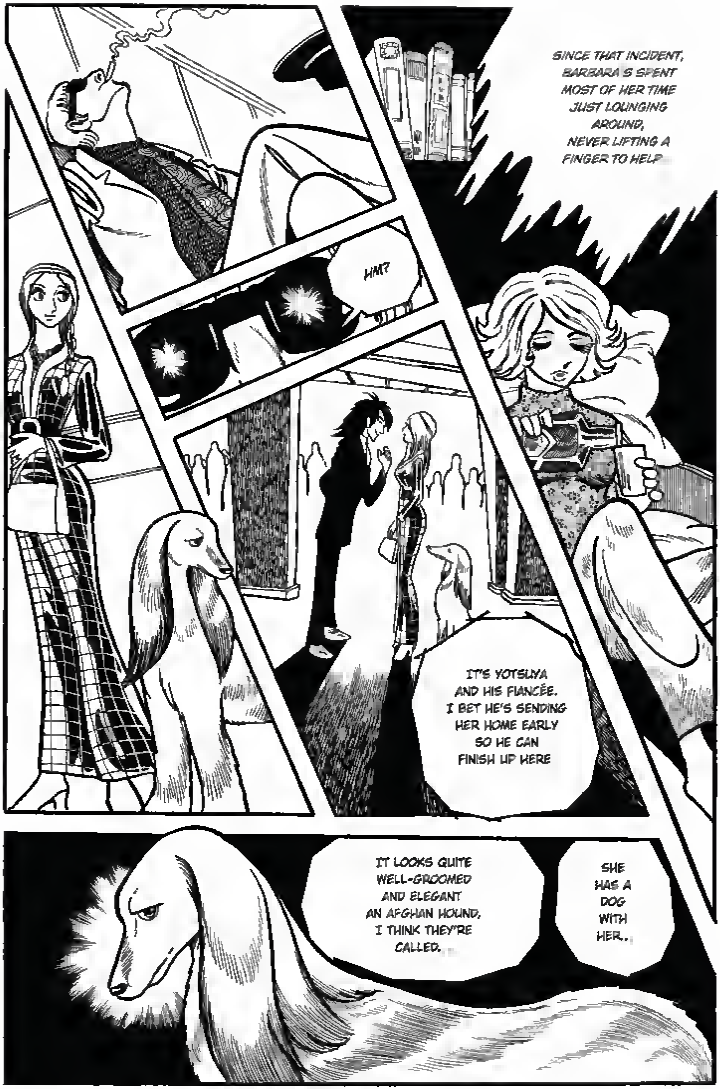
## THE WOMAN AND THE DOG

"WINE COMES IN AT THE MOUTH
AND LOVE COMES IN AT THE EYE;
THAT'S ALL WE SHALL KNOW FOR TRUTH
BEFORE WE GROW OLD AND DIE
I LIFT MY GLASS TO MY MOUTH,
I LOOK AT YOU, AND I SIGH."
IROYUKI YOTSUYA
PUBLICATION PARTY
I AM CAUGHT IN A NEVERENDING STREAM OF VULGARIANS
EVEN NOW AT A PARTY FOR MY COLLEAGUE HIROYUKI YOTSUYA...

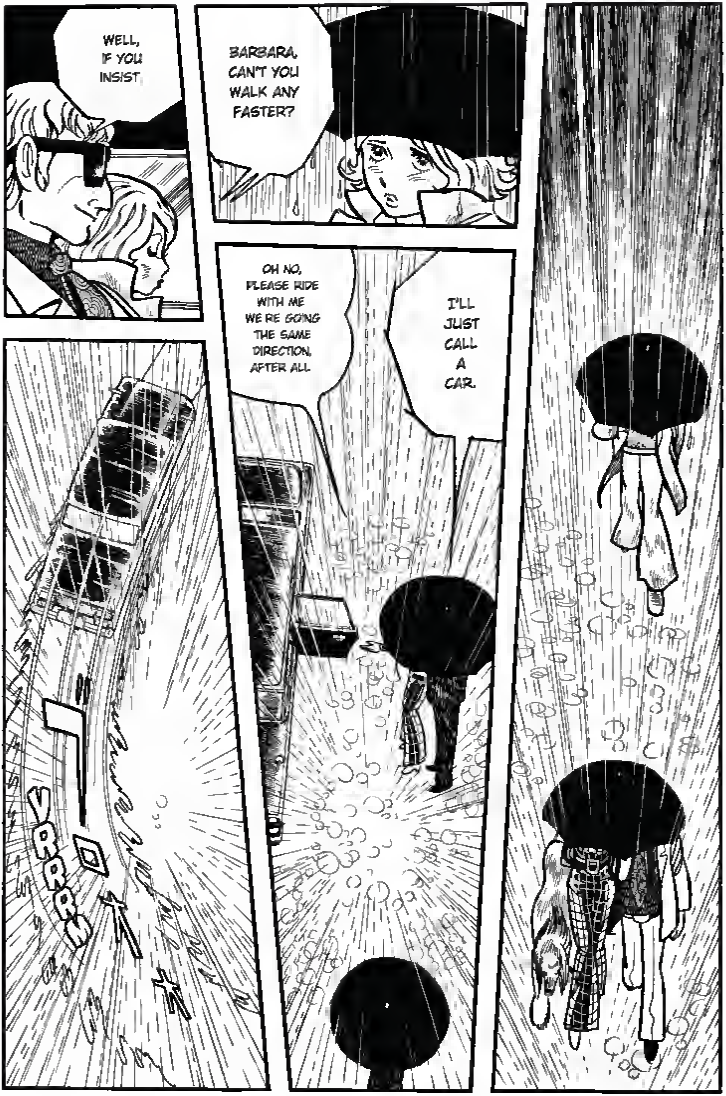
IT'S A DRUNKEN, SICK FEELING
YOTSUYA IS EVEN GOT A TALENTED, BEAUTIFUL AND KIND-HEARTED FIANCEE, IN THAT SEAT THERE
WITH THE PARTY IN FULL SWING, THE OFFICIOUS EMCEE'S OFFERING UP YET ANOTHER ANECDOTE...
WHEN DID YOTSUYA GET HIS HANDS ON HER?
WELL, WELL, SHE'S REALLY SOMETHING.
SHE NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION... RISING STAR OF THE BUNMIN THEATER, MISS RUMI NAGAHAMA!

BRRRK
SHH
NO ONE'S THERE.
DAMN IT. I BET BARBARA'S DRUNK AGAIN...
AH, HELLO. IS THAT YOU, BARBARA?
YEAH IT'S RAINING BRING AN UMBRELLA AND COME MEET ME YES. IN FRONT OF THE HALL.
IT'D BE NICE IF SHE CAME STRAIGHT HERE, BUT SOMEHOW I DOUBT SHE WILL...
OH NO, IT'S RAINING.
OH, MIKURA! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.
YOU'RE THE SAME AGE AS YOTSUYA, AREN'T YOU? ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU SETTLED DOWN YOURSELF?
SENSEI, PLEASE GIVE MY KANAKO A REPLY, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.
WHEN THIS TOPIC COMES UP ALL I CAN DO IS WALK AWAY.

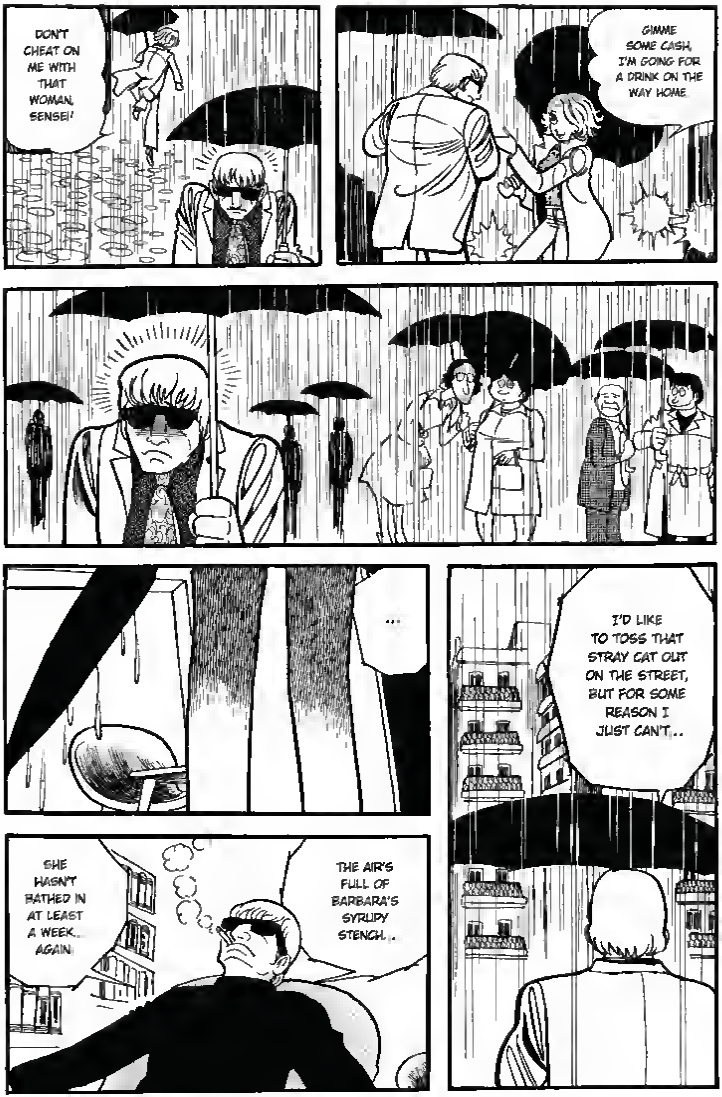
©ION Hiroyuki Yotsuya Publication Party

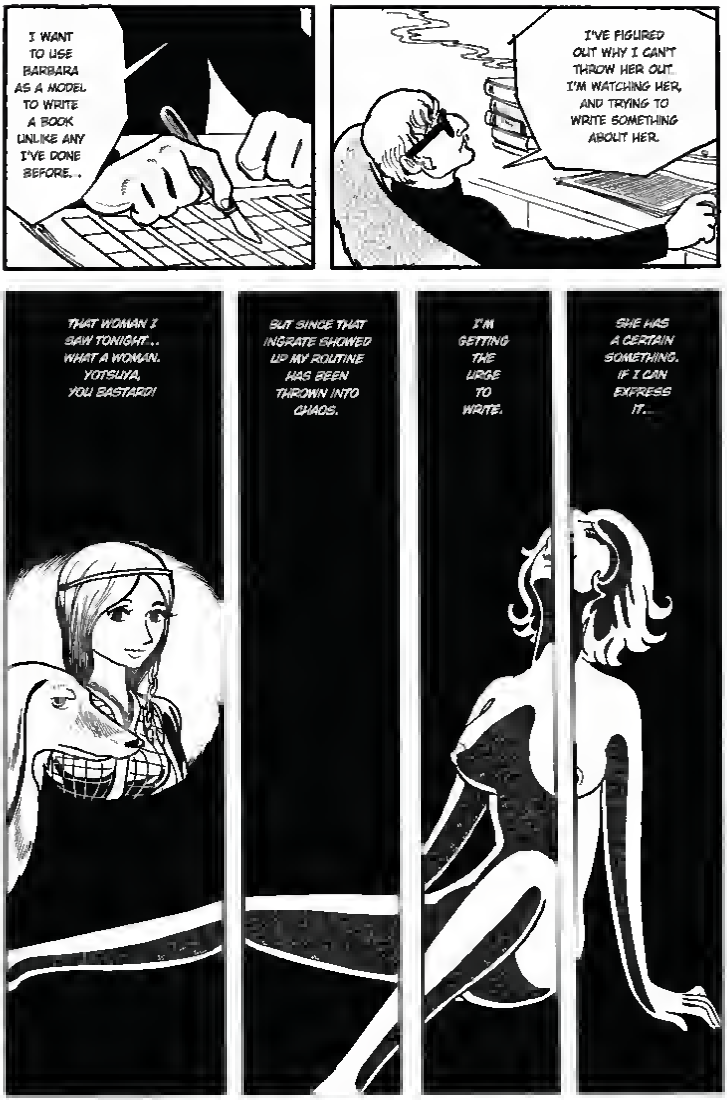

SINCE THAT INCIDENT, BARBARA'S SPENT MOST OF HER TIME JUST LOUNGING AROUND, NEVER LIFTING A FINGER TO HELP
HM?
IT'S YOTSUYA AND HIS FIANCÉE. I BET HE'S SENDING HER HOME EARLY SO HE CAN FINISH UP HERE
SHE HAS A DOG WITH HER..
IT LOOKS QUITE WELL-GROOMED AND ELEGANT AN AFGHAN HOUND, I THINK THEY'RE CALLED.

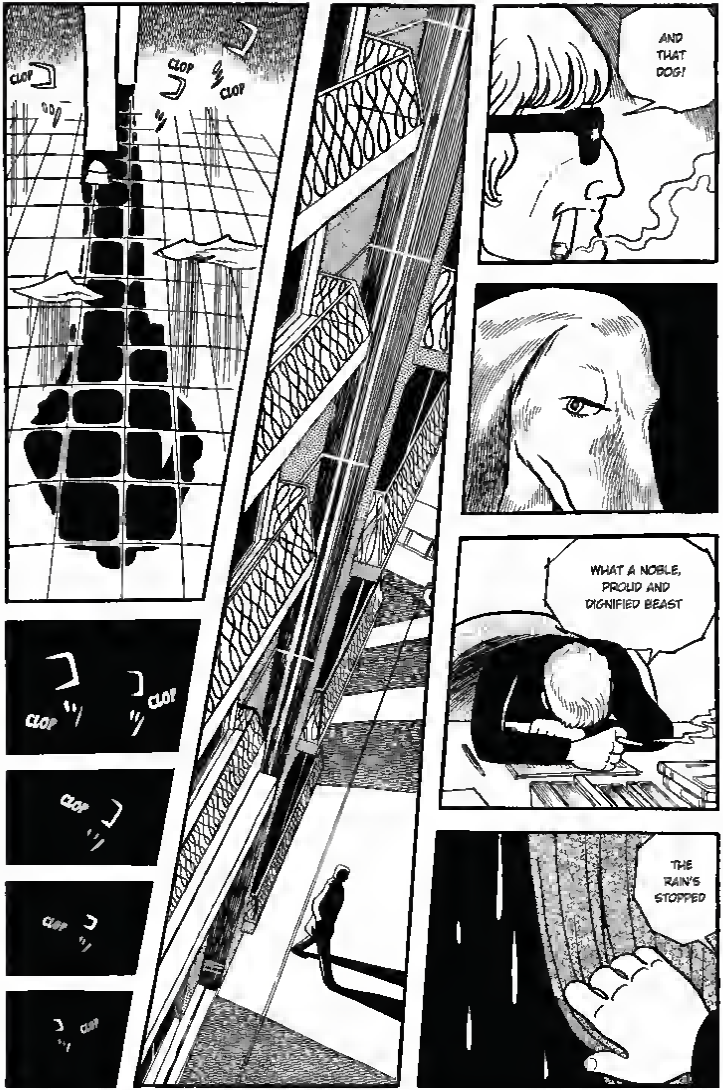
SEN-SEI!
HERE'S YOUR UMBRELLA!
WELL WELL, THAT WAS FAST
A WOMAN AND A DOG IN PERFECT BALANCE, AS IF OUT OF A PAINTING IN A FRAME...
THERE PROBABLY WON'T BE ANY CARS COMING IN THIS DOWNPOUR.
I... LEFT MY CAR ELSEWHERE, I'M AFRAID...
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO WALK YOU TO YOUR CAR? WE'LL USE MY UMBRELLA.
OH, MY... THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
I'LL BE HIRING A CAR ANYWAY...

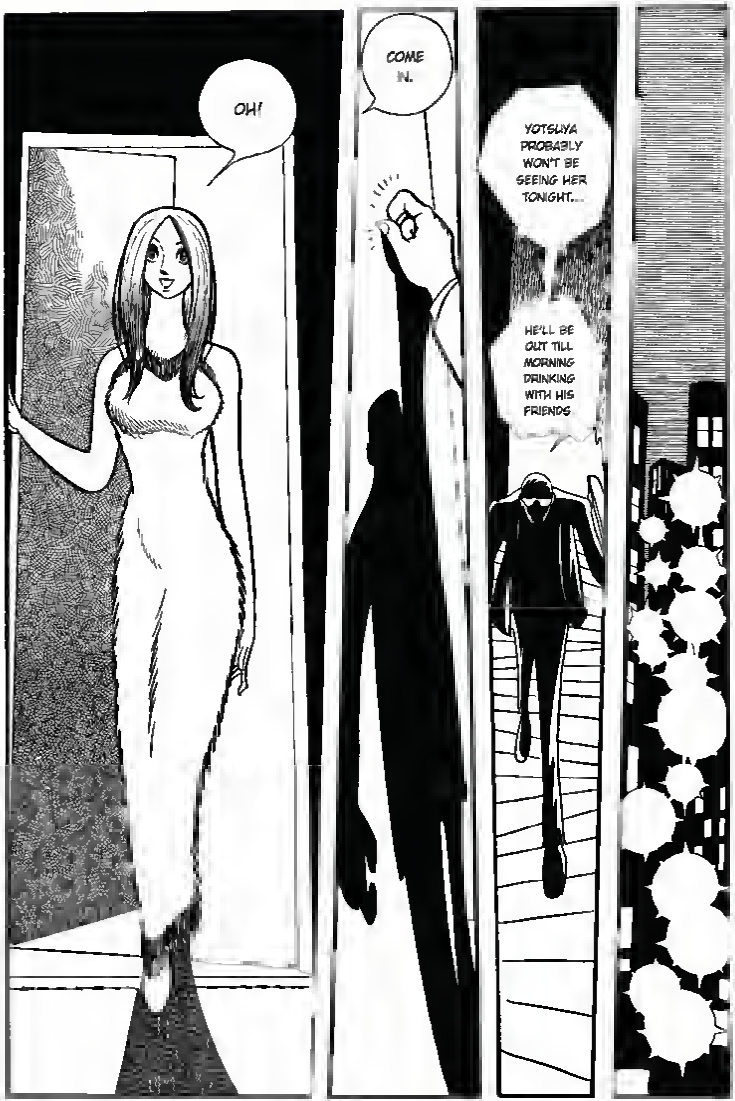

WELL, IF YOU INSIST.
BARBARA, CAN'T YOU WALK ANY FASTER?
I'LL JUST CALL A CAR.
OH NO, PLEASE RIDE WITH ME WE'RE GOING THE SAME DIRECTION, AFTER ALL
VROOM

WHAM
WHAT'S YOUR DOG'S NAME?
IT'S SONYA.
WHAT, "TOTO" WAS TAKEN?
WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME IN UNTIL THE RAIN STOPS?
THAT'S VERY GRACIOUS, BUT NO BARBARA, THANK THE WOMAN!
YOUR BEHAVIOR WAS DISGRACEFUL! DON'T YOU HAVE ANY MANNERS?
BARBARA! STOP THAT!

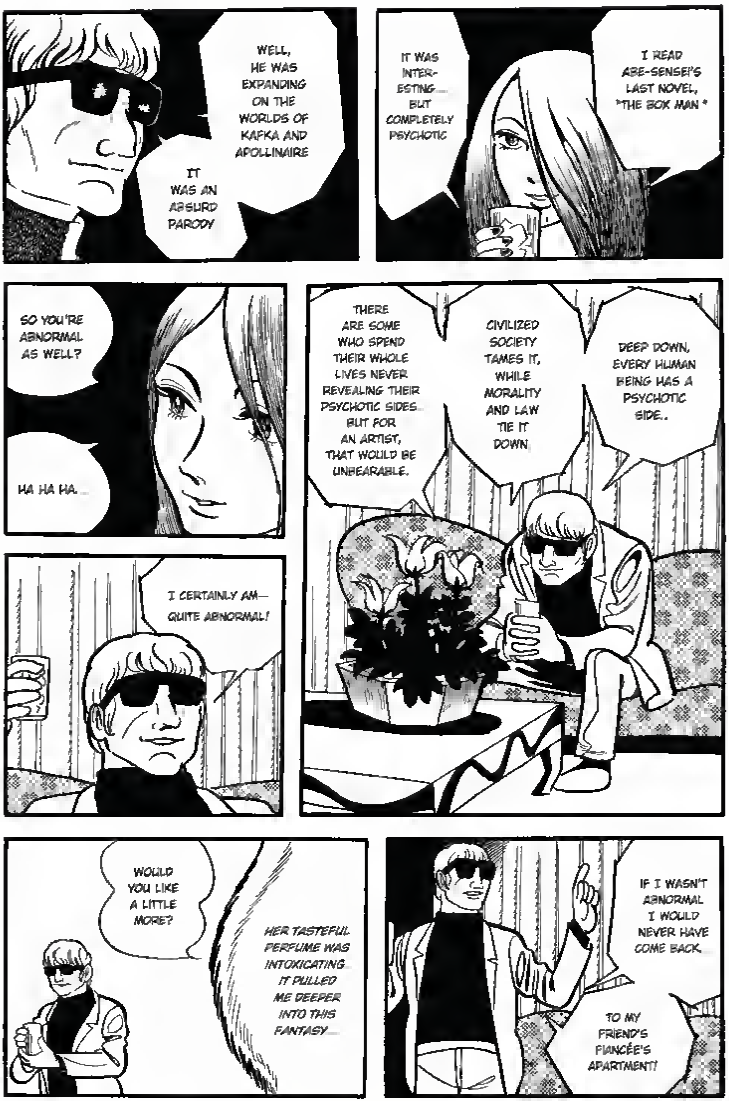

DON'T CHEAT ON ME WITH THAT WOMAN, SENSEI!
GIMME SOME CASH, I'M GOING FOR A DRINK ON THE WAY HOME.
...
I'D LIKE TO TOSS THAT STRAY CAT OUT ON THE STREET, BUT FOR SOME REASON I JUST CAN'T..
SHE HASN'T BATHED IN AT LEAST A WEEK.. AGAIN!
THE AIR'S FULL OF BARBARA'S SYRUPY STENCH..

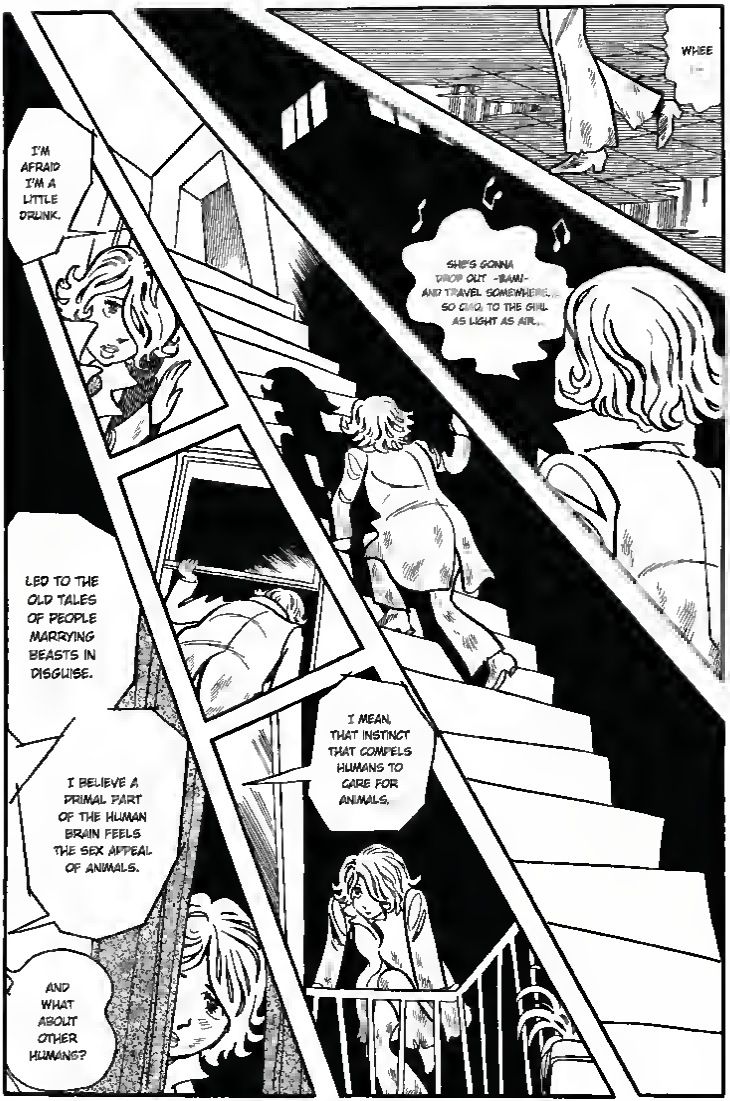

I WANT TO USE BARBARA AS A MODEL TO WRITE A BOOK UNLIKE ANY I'VE DONE BEFORE. .
I'VE FIGURED OUT WHY I CAN'T THROW HER OUT. I'M WATCHING HER, AND TRYING TO WRITE SOMETHING ABOUT HER.
THAT WOMAN I SAW TONIGHT.. WHAT A WOMAN. YOTSUYA, YOU BASTARD!
BUT SINCE THAT INGRATE SHOWED UP MY ROUTINE HAS BEEN THROWN INTO CHAOS.
I'M GETTING THE URGE TO WRITE.
SHE HAS A CERTAIN SOMETHING. IF I CAN EXPRESS IT...


CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
CLOP
AND THAT DOG!
WHAT A NOBLE, PROUD AND DIGNIFIED BEAST
THE RAIN'S STOPPED


OH!
COME IN.
YOTSUYA PROBABLY WON'T BE SEEING HER TONIGHT...
HE'LL BE OUT TILL MORNING DRINKING WITH HIS FRIENDS

SHE GREETED ME WITH A SMILE... AS IF SHE'D BEEN EXPECTING ME.
I WAS ALONE AT HOME ANYWAY, SO I THOUGHT...
OF COURSE COME IN!
IT'S MODEST, BUT THE DESIGN IS STILL FASHIONABLE.
SOMETHING IS MISSING. OF COURSE! HER COMPANION ISN'T HERE.
YOU HAVE A NICE ROOM.
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE?
EVEN KŌBŌ ABE LOOKS UP TO HIM.
YES. I'VE KNOWN HIM FOR ALMOST SIX YEARS. HE'S A FORTUNATE MAN.
YOU'RE CLOSE TO YOTSUYA-SAN, AREN'T YOU?


I READ ABE-SENSEI'S LAST NOVEL, "THE BOX MAN."
IT WAS INTER-ESTING... BUT COMPLETELY PSYCHOTIC
WELL, HE WAS EXPANDING ON THE WORLDS OF KAFKA AND APOLLINAIRE
IT WAS AN ABSURD PARODY
DEEP DOWN, EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS A PSYCHOTIC SIDE..
CIVILIZED SOCIETY TAMES IT, WHILE MORALITY AND LAW TIE IT DOWN.
THERE ARE SOME WHO SPEND THEIR WHOLE LIVES NEVER REVEALING THEIR PSYCHOTIC SIDES... BUT FOR AN ARTIST, THAT WOULD BE UNBEARABLE.
SO YOU'RE ABNORMAL AS WELL?
HA HA HA...
I CERTAINLY AM— QUITE ABNORMAL!
IF I WASN'T ABNORMAL I WOULD NEVER HAVE COME BACK.
TO MY FRIEND'S FIANCÉE'S APARTMENT!
WOULD YOU LIKE A LITTLE MORE?
HER TASTEFUL PERFUME WAS INTOXICATING. IT PULLED ME DEEPER INTO THIS FANTASY...

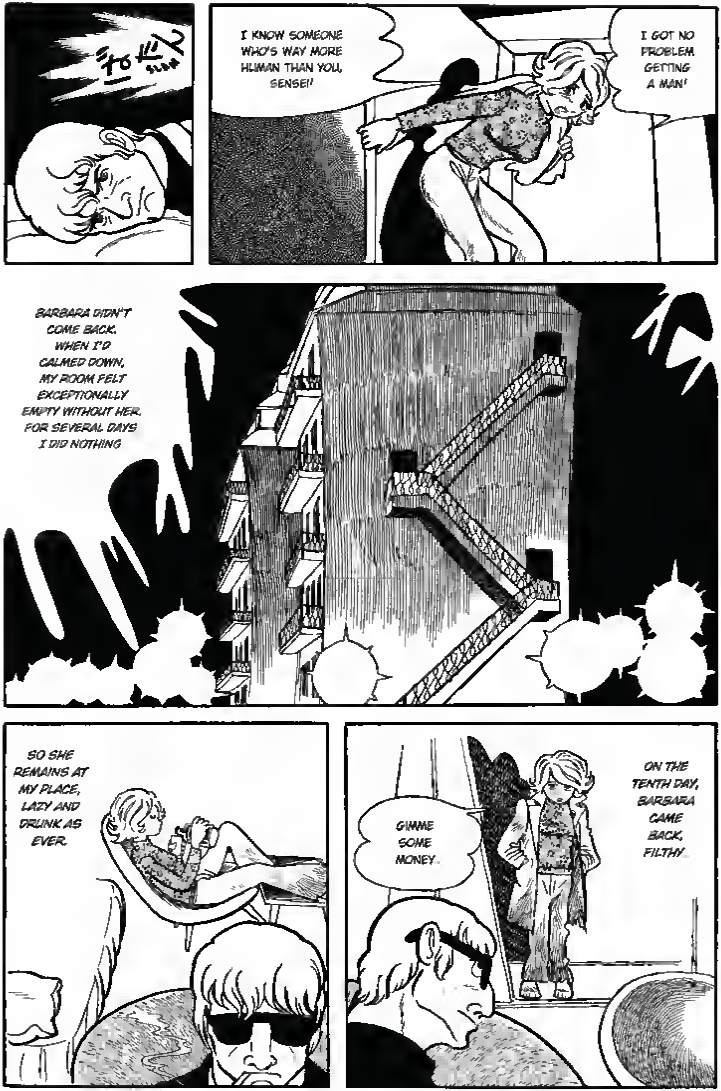

WHEE
I'M AFRAID I'M A LITTLE DRUNK.
SHE'S GONNA DROP OUT -RAMI- AND TRAVEL SOMEWHERE... SO CUTE. TO THE GIRL AS LIGHT AS AIR...
LED TO THE OLD TALES OF PEOPLE MARRYING BEASTS IN DISGUISE.
I MEAN, THAT INSTINCT THAT COMPELS HUMANS TO CARE FOR ANIMALS.
I BELIEVE A PRIMAL PART OF THE HUMAN BRAIN FEELS THE SEX APPEAL OF ANIMALS.
AND WHAT ABOUT OTHER HUMANS?

I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN..
HOW COULD HE...
THIS SUPPLE HAIR..
HOLD ME CLOSE...
I NEVER WANT TO LEAVE YOU!
THIS SWEET AROMA...

CLATTER
WH-WHAT THE- BARBARA!
DO YOU HAVE NO SHAME ?!
STOP THIS, BAR- BARA!
WRUMP

WHAT'VE YOU DONE, YOU HALFWIT!
YOU MURDERER!
SENSEI, YOU WERE SLEEPING WITH THE DOG! IT WAS A FEMALE DOG!
SENSEI, WE HAVE TO RUN. WE'LL BE IN BIG TROUBLE IF THEY FIND THE DOG LIKE THIS!
I KNOW- WE'LL MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A ROBBERY!
FORGOT TO WIPE OFF MY FINGER-PRINTS!
AND.. I'LL TAKE THIS.
SHEESH

STOP BEING SUCH A PERVERT... OK, SENSEI?
EVEN RUMI WOULD'VE BEEN BETTER THAN THE DOG...
I TRY TO STOP, BUT IT'S USELESS...
THIS IS THE ONLY THING SUSTAINING MY WRITING
IF I DID STOP, IT WOULD MEAN THE END OF ME.
WHAT IF YOU TRIED A MORE NORMAL ROMANCE?
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE WITH ME..
CAN'T YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WOMAN AND A BITCH?
...DID THE DOG LOOK LIKE A WOMAN TO YOU?
OH, THANKS A LOT!
AS IF I WOULD EVER WANT A ROMANCE WITH YOU!
ADIOS! AND DON'T TRY TO STOP ME!
I DON'T WANT TO LIVE WITH A WEIRDO LIKE YOU, ANYWAY!

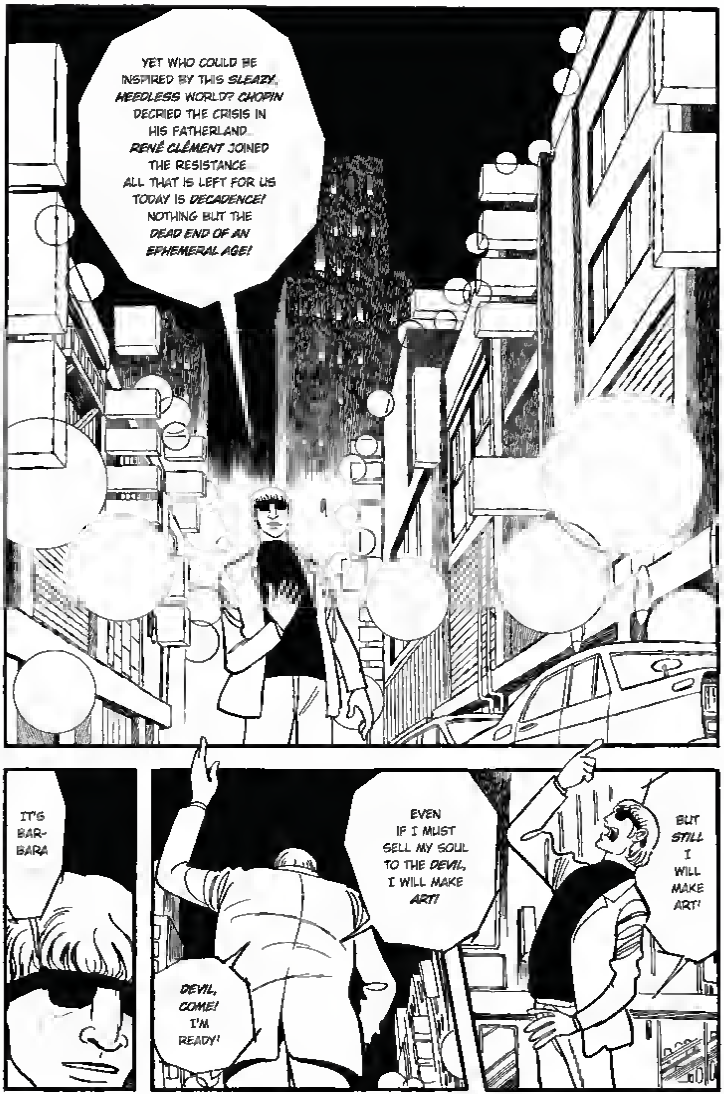

I KNOW SOMEONE WHO'S WAY MORE HUMAN THAN YOU, SENSEI!
I GOT NO PROBLEM GETTING A MAN!
BARBARA DIDN'T COME BACK. WHEN I'D CALMED DOWN, MY ROOM FELT EXCEPTIONALLY EMPTY WITHOUT HER. FOR SEVERAL DAYS I DID NOTHING
SO SHE REMAINS AT MY PLACE, LAZY AND DRUNK AS EVER.
GIMME SOME MONEY.
ON THE TENTH DAY, BARBARA CAME BACK, FILTHY.

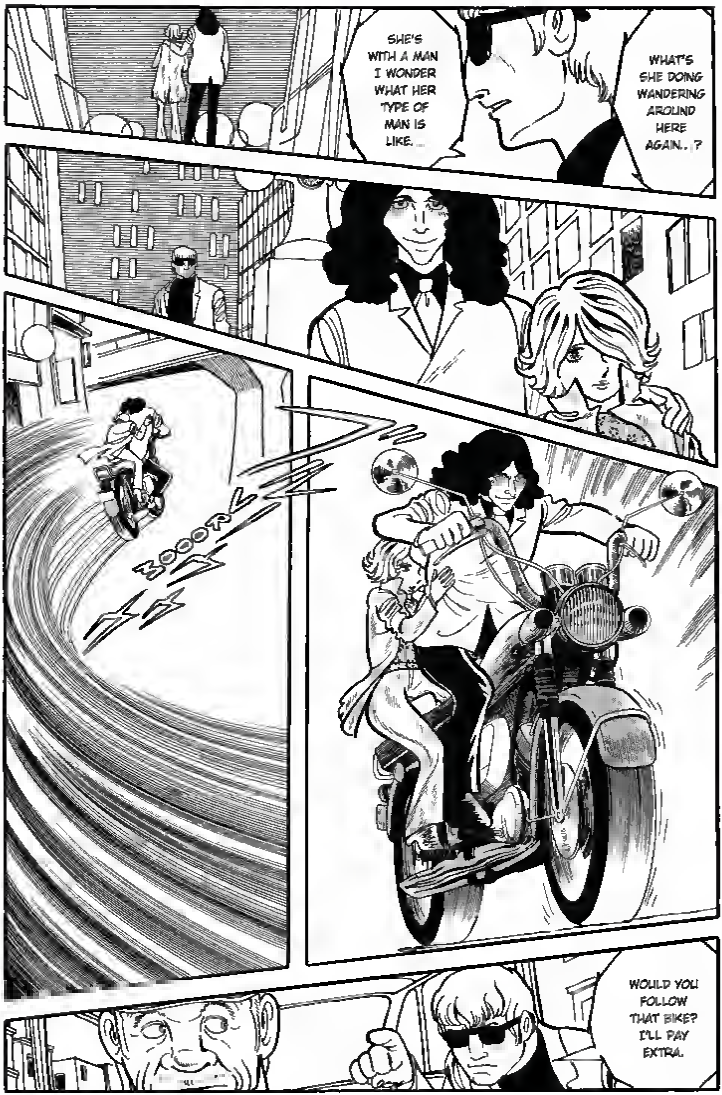
# Barbara ばるばら

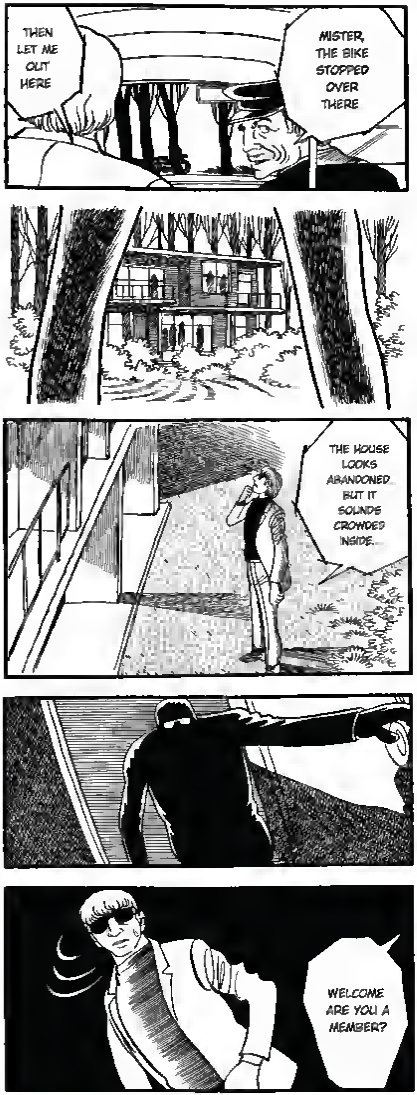
CHAPTER THREE

## THE BLACK PLAZA

SENSEI, YOUR STANDARDS ARE TOO HIGH FOR A GIRL TO REACH!
OH SENSEI, YOU'RE SUCH A JOKER!
GUESS THAT MAKES YOU AN IDEALIST!
THAT'S RIGHT! YOUR IDEAL GIRL DOESN'T EXIST!
AND WHAT DELIVERS ME FROM MY DILEMMA? STIMULATION!
WHAT QUICKENS THE PASSAGE OF TIME? ACTION.
WHAT MAKES IT PASS INSUFFERABLY SLOWLY? IDLENESS.
WHAT SINKS MAN DOWN INTO FRUSTRATION? LANGUOR AND PASSIVITY.
AND HOW DOES HE RISE UP? BY AVOIDING WASTEFUL CONTEMPLATION
WHAT SAFEGUARDS HIS HONOR? VIGILANCE.
I CRAVE STIMULATION.
Insect
Papilio
Fly
Bee
MUSIC


YET WHO COULD BE INSPIRED BY THIS SLEAZY, MEEDLESS WORLD? CHOPIN DECRIED THE CRISIS IN HIS FATHERLAND. RENÉ CLÉMENT JOINED THE RESISTANCE. ALL THAT IS LEFT FOR US TODAY IS DECADENCE! NOTHING BUT THE DEAD END OF AN EPHEMERAL AGE!
IT'S BARBARA
EVEN IF I MUST SELL MY SOUL TO THE DEVIL, I WILL MAKE ART!
DEVIL, COME! I'M READY!
BUT STILL I WILL MAKE ART!


WHAT'S SHE DOING WANDERING AROUND HERE AGAIN..?
SHE'S WITH A MAN I WONDER WHAT HER TYPE OF MAN IS LIKE...
BOOOT
WOULD YOU FOLLOW THAT BIKE? I'LL PAY EXTRA.

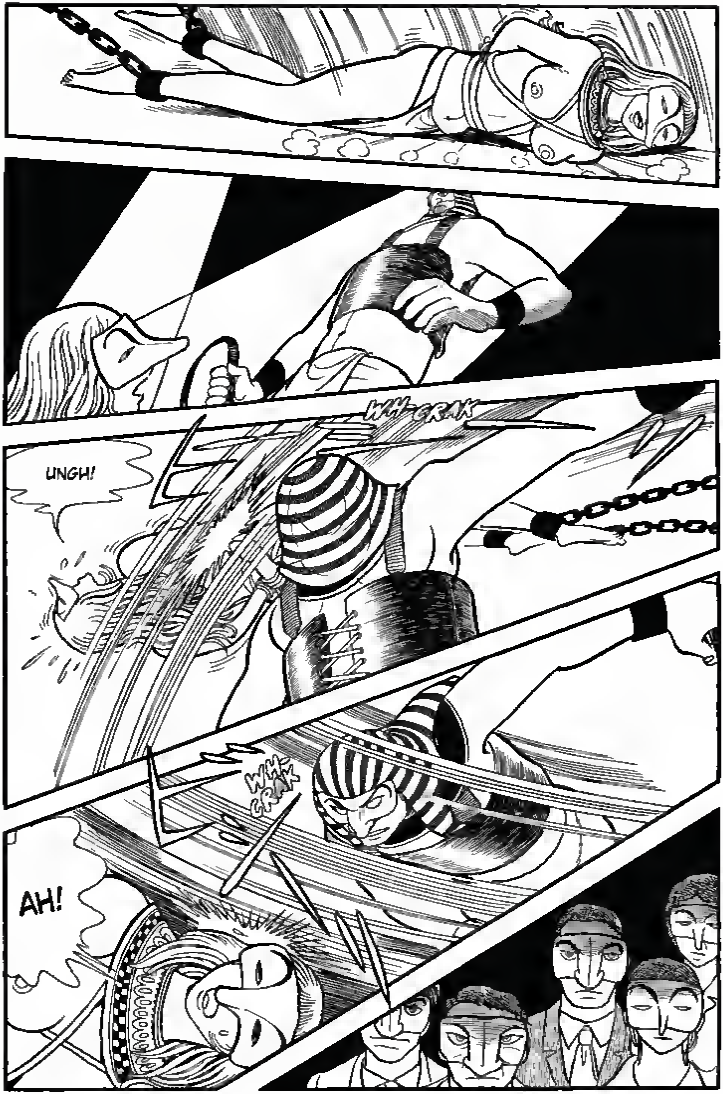

THEN LET ME OUT HERE
MISTER, THE BIKE STOPPED OVER THERE
THE HOUSE LOOKS ABANDONED BUT IT SOUNDS CROWDED INSIDE...
WELCOME ARE YOU A MEMBER?
VROOOM!!

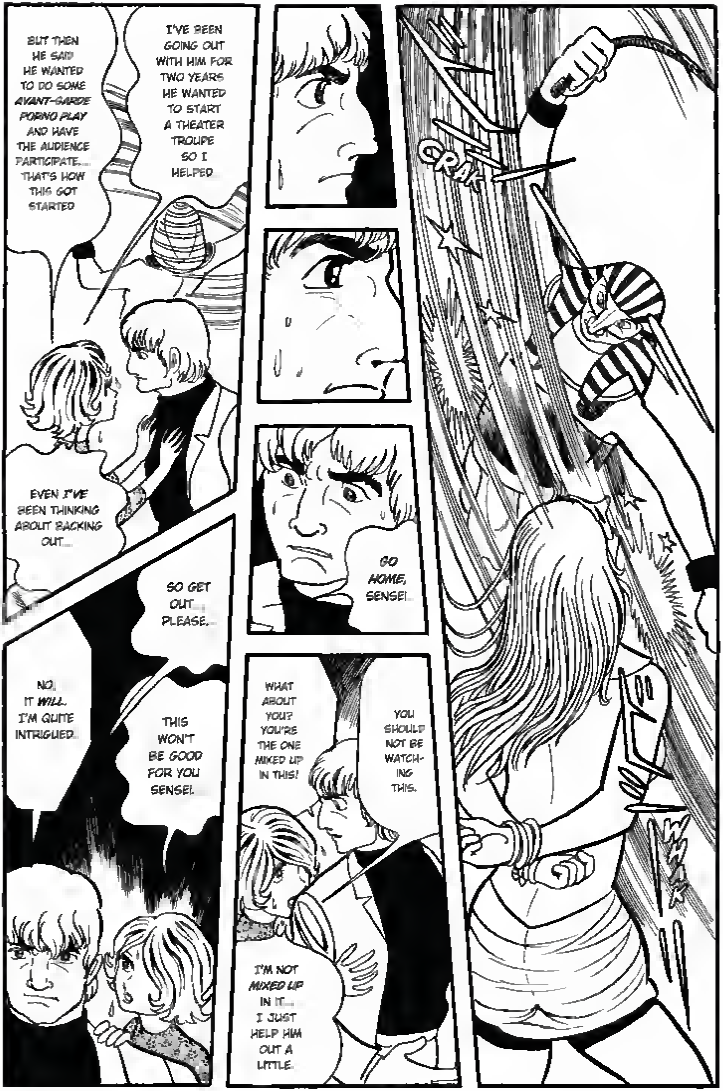
HERE IS YOUR MASK.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, BUT... I CHOOSE B
IF YOU'RE NOT A MEMBER, PLEASE PAY 5,000 YEN, AND SELECT A OR B.
N—NO..
PLEASE PUT IT ON!
AS YOU ALREADY KNOW.. IN "THE BLACK PLAZA" YOU ARE ALL ACTORS IN STARRING ROLES. YOU ARE ALSO THE AUDIENCE.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE ALLOW ME TO RAISE THE CURTAIN ON THE FIFTH PERFORMANCE OF "THE BLACK PLAZA."
I DON'T UNDER-STAND AT ALL.
THAT'S THE MAN WHO WAS WITH BARBARA..
!

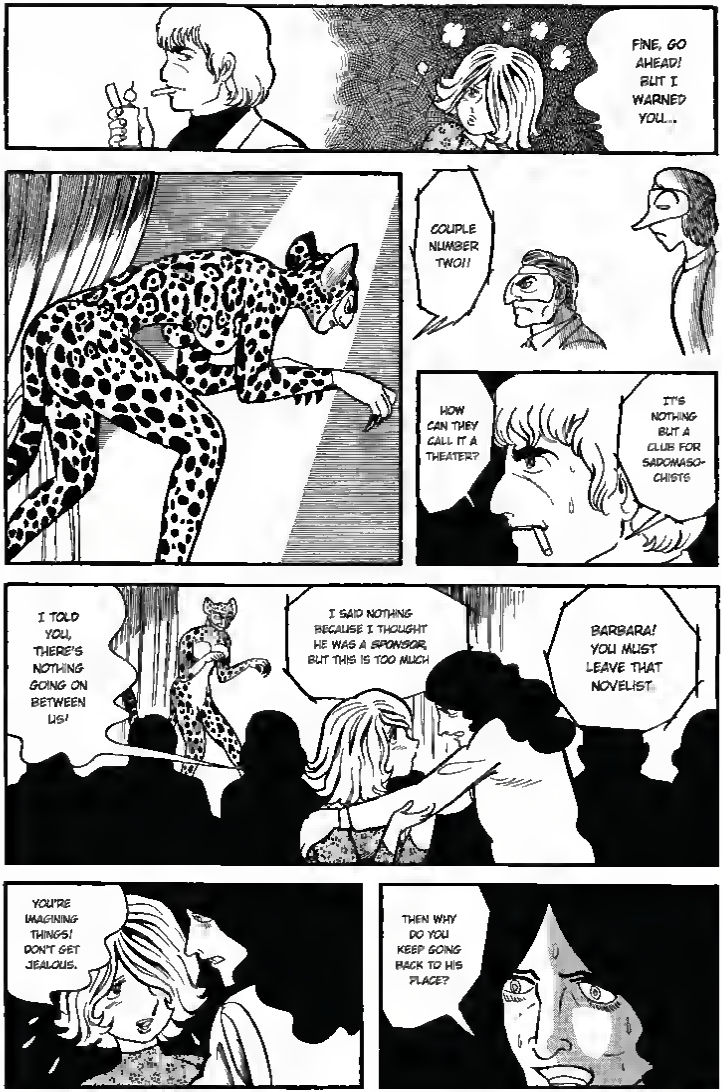
WHEN THE GONG SOUNDS, PLEASE STEP ONTO THE STAGE AND BEGIN THE PERFORMANCE
BETWEEN ACTS, PLEASE GO WITH YOUR PARTNER TO MAKEUP AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES BEFORE YOU GO ON.
I WILL NOW PASS OUT CARDS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RULES THEY WILL DETERMINE WHICH "A" WILL BE PAIRED WITH WHICH "B."
TAKE A CARD
HM?
THAT'S YOUR PARTNER OVER THERE.
YOU'RE IN COUPLE NUMBER THREE
NO, I JUST FOLLOWED THE GIRL WHO'S BEEN STAYING WITH ME SHE'S OVER THERE!
REFUSE? DIDN'T YOU COME HERE KNOWING WHAT THIS PLACE WAS?
SOMETHING STRANGE IS GOING ON HERE I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO, BUT I REFUSE TO PARTICIPATE.

YOU WERE WALKING AROUND WITH A MAN... I WONDERED WHO HE WAS
SENSEI! WHY WOULD YOU COME TO A PLACE LIKE THIS?
SOMEONE SNUCK IN SEE? IT'S THAT FAMOUS WRITER.
WHAT IS IT, BARBARA?
YOU IDIOT! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE. GO HOME!
SO YOU'VE BEEN TAKING MY ROYALTY PAYMENTS TO SUPPORT THIS PLACE?
CONTRIBU-TIONS? ME?
BARBARA HAS TOLD ME SO MUCH ABOUT YOU. THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBU-TIONS..
... ...
THEN I MUST INTRODUCE MYSELF.
HEH HEH HEH..

THIS IS AN UNUSUAL BUILDING... IS IT A THEATER?
YES THE "BLACK PLAZA"
IS BARBARA ONE OF THE ACTORS?
NO ... SHE'S JUST A VOLUNTEER. SHE TAKES TICKETS, PASSES OUT THE CARDS AND DOES ODD JOBS
PLEASE, RELAX AND ENJOY THE SHOW
BONNG

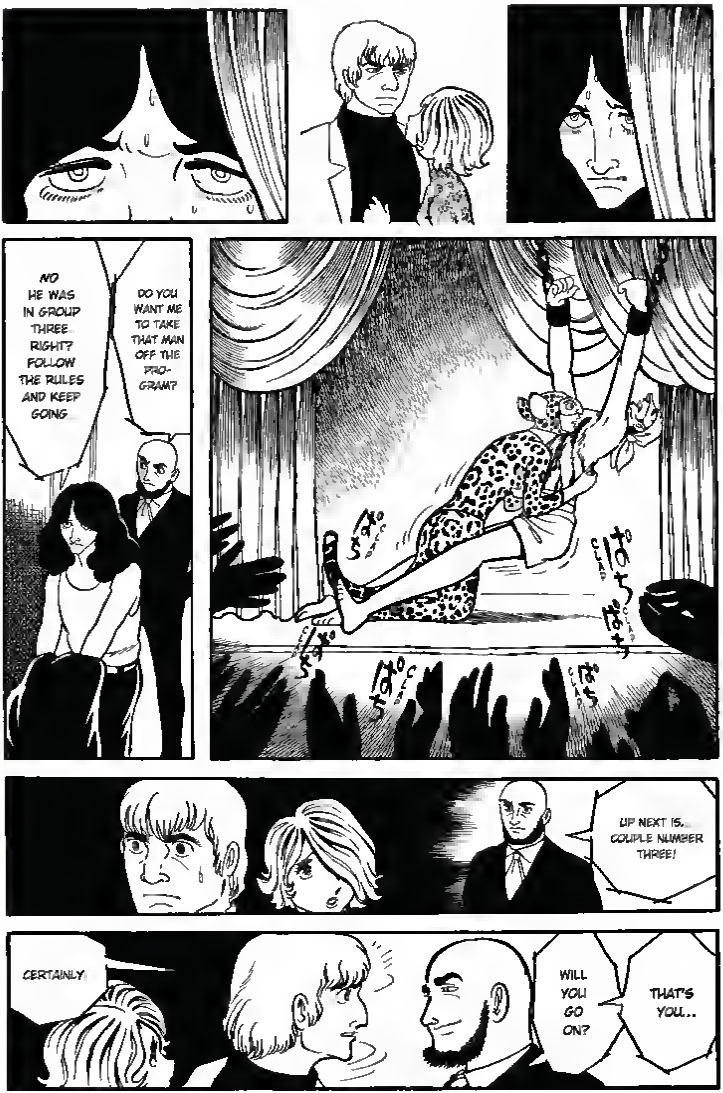

WH-CRAK
UNGH!
WHK WHK CRAK
AH!


I'VE BEEN GOING OUT WITH HIM FOR TWO YEARS. HE WANTED TO START A THEATER TROUPE SO I HELPED.
BUT THEN HE SAID HE WANTED TO DO SOME AVANT-GARDE PORNO PLAY AND HAVE THE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATE... THAT'S HOW THIS GOT STARTED.
EVEN I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT BACKING OUT...
GO HOME, SENSEI.
SO GET OUT, PLEASE...
NO, IT WILL. I'M QUITE INTRIGUED.
THIS WON'T BE GOOD FOR YOU SENSEI.
WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU'RE THE ONE MIXED UP IN THIS!
YOU SHOULD NOT BE WATCHING THIS.
I'M NOT MIXED UP IN IT... I JUST HELP HIM OUT A LITTLE.
GRR...

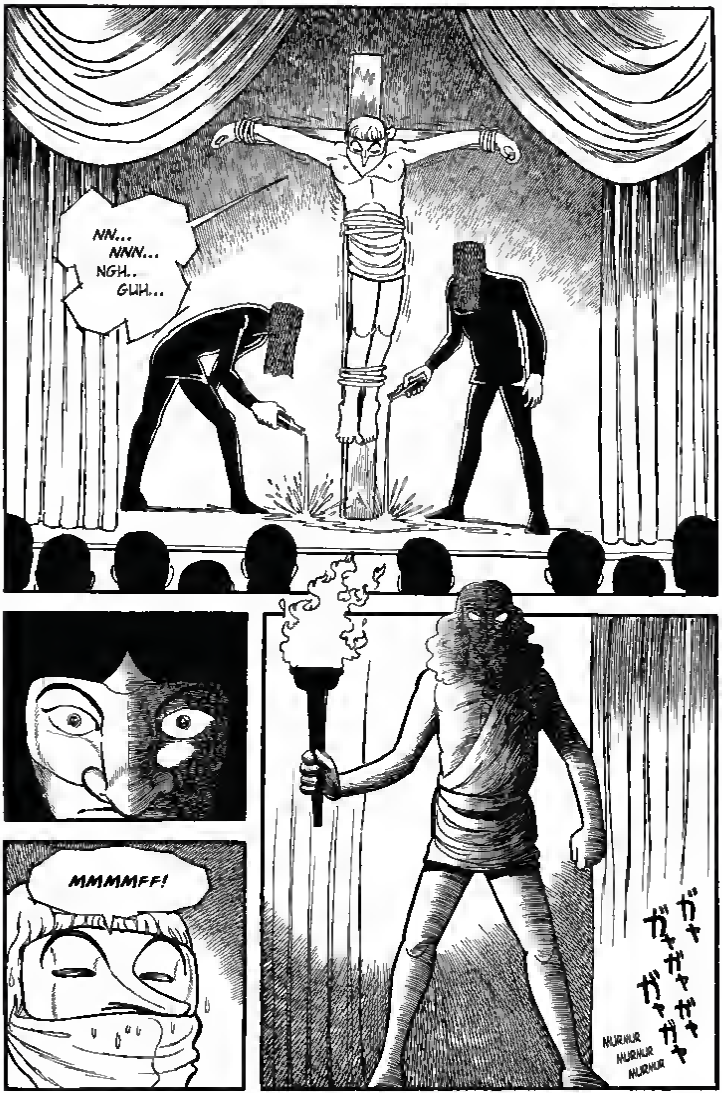

FINE, GO AHEAD! BUT I WARNED YOU...
COUPLE NUMBER TWO!!
HOW CAN THEY CALL IT A THEATER?
IT'S NOTHING BUT A CLUB FOR SADOMASOCHISTS
I TOLD YOU, THERE'S NOTHING GOING ON BETWEEN US!
I SAID NOTHING BECAUSE I THOUGHT HE WAS A SPONSOR, BUT THIS IS TOO MUCH
BARBARA! YOU MUST LEAVE THAT NOVELIST.
YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS! DON'T GET JEALOUS.
THEN WHY DO YOU KEEP GOING BACK TO HIS PLACE?

NNGAAH!

HMPH...
BARBARA, DO YOU LOVE THAT MAN?
I WON'T BE DOING THESE SHOWS FOREVER!
I THOUGHT I EXPLAINED THIS BUSINESS TO YOU CLEARLY FROM THE START. ARE YOU TIRED OF IT? THIS IS JUST TO MAKE MONEY YOU KNOW! I PROMISED THAT WHEN I MADE ENOUGH WE'D MOVE TO PARIS!
I'M NOT GONNA LEAVE. I MEAN, WE'VE COME THIS FAR.
HEY, DON'T LEAVE ME YOU'VE BEEN ACTING REALLY STRANGE LATELY.
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSI-NESS!
DON'T GO TO HIS PLACE ANYMORE!
IF YOU KEEP PRYING I REALLY WILL GET TIRED OF IT. YOU'RE NOT MY ONLY FRIEND!
YOU'RE SO PUSHY... JUST STOP!
NO! IT'S ALL OVER YOUR FACE! YOU NO LONGER HAVE ANY FEELINGS FOR ME!

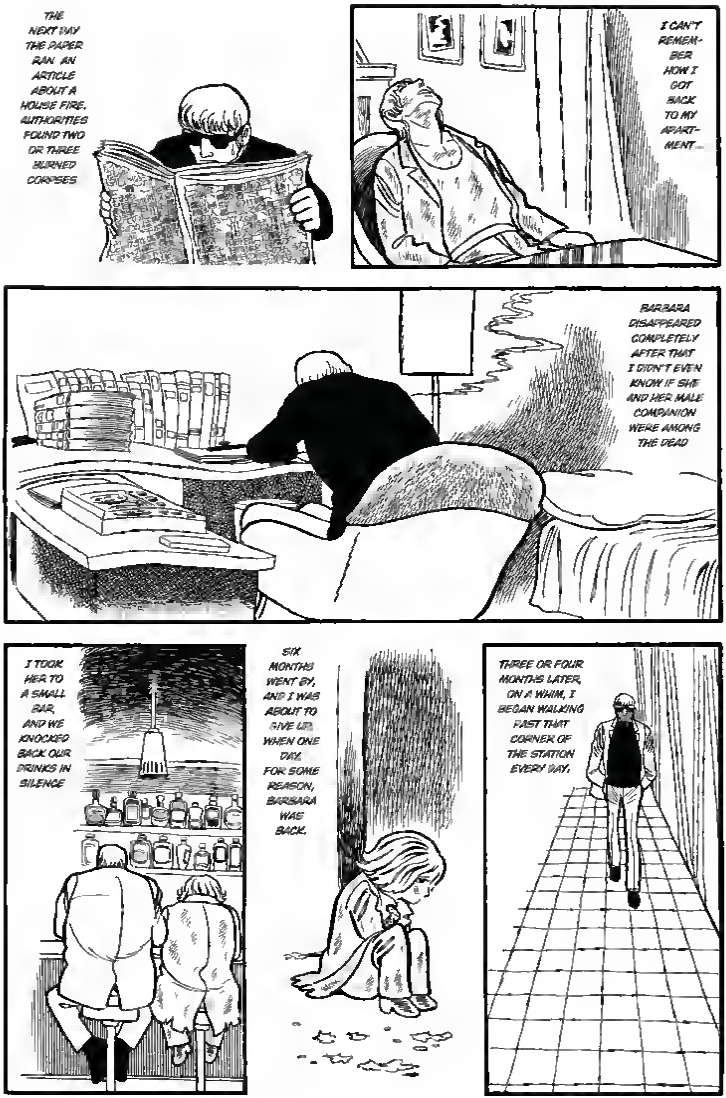

DO YOU WANT ME TO TAKE THAT MAN OFF THE PROGRAM?
NO HE WAS IN GROUP THREE RIGHT? FOLLOW THE RULES AND KEEP GOING
UP NEXT IS.. COUPLE NUMBER THREE!
THAT'S YOU..
WILL YOU GO ON?
CERTAINLY

STOP IT, SENSEI! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'LL DO TO YOU! STOP THIS AND GO HOME!
REMINDS ME OF MY TIME IN THE THEATER.
MAKEUP ROOM
THIS WAY, PLEASE...
NO SENSEI, YOU'LL REGRET THIS!
OF COURSE, I WAS NEVER ASKED TO PUT ON MAKEUP AND A SPECIAL DISGUISE TO PLAY A SADOMASOCHIST. IT'S QUITE UNIQUE.
MMM!
WH- WHAT ARE YOU DOI- MPH!


NN...
NNN...
NGH..
GUH...
MMMMFF!
ガヤ
ガヤガヤ
ガヤガヤ
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR

...
IS HE GOING TO SET THAT GAS ON FIRE?
WAIT A MINUTE- THAT'S GOING TOO FAR!
THE STAGE WILL BURN!
NNNM! MM! MMF!
HE'S GONE MAD!
IT'S ON FIRE!
SHMF!!
UNGH!
SHMF!!

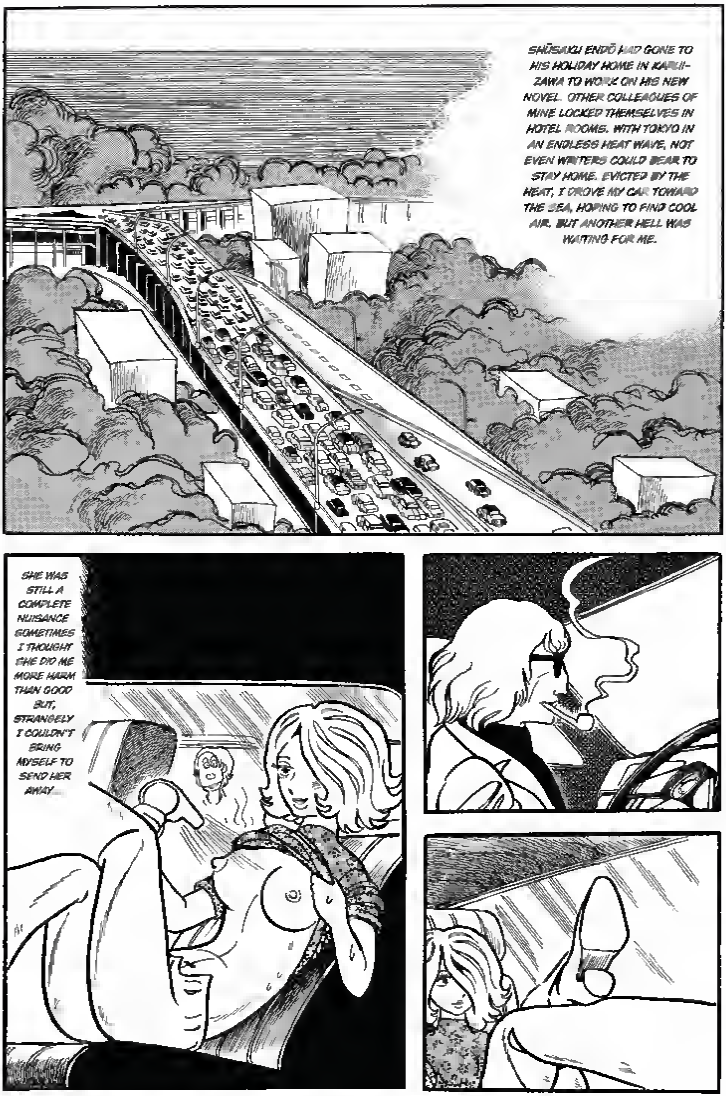
PANICKING, I JOINED THE CROWD AND RAN OFF IN A DAZE. I HAD LIGHT BURNS IN TWO OR THREE PLACES, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER.
ADIOS, SENSEI!
BARBARA, YOU'LL BURN TO DEATH!
I WARNED YOU, SENSEI!
YOU'RE TOO TRUST-ING!
GAAHHHH!
FIRE! FIRE!
RUN!


THE NEXT DAY THE PAPER RAN AN ARTICLE ABOUT A HOUSE FIRE. AUTHORITIES FOUND TWO OR THREE BURNED CORPSES
I CAN'T REMEMBER HOW I GOT BACK TO MY APARTMENT...
BARBARA DISAPPEARED COMPLETELY AFTER THAT. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IF SHE AND HER MALE COMPANION WERE AMONG THE DEAD
I TOOK HER TO A SMALL BAR, AND WE KNOCKED BACK OUR DRINKS IN SILENCE
SIX MONTHS WENT BY, AND I WAS ABOUT TO GIVE UP, WHEN ONE DAY, FOR SOME REASON, BARBARA WAS BACK.
THREE OR FOUR MONTHS LATER, ON A WHIM, I BEGAN WALKING PAST THAT CORNER OF THE STATION EVERY DAY.

# Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER FOUR.

## THE SECRET

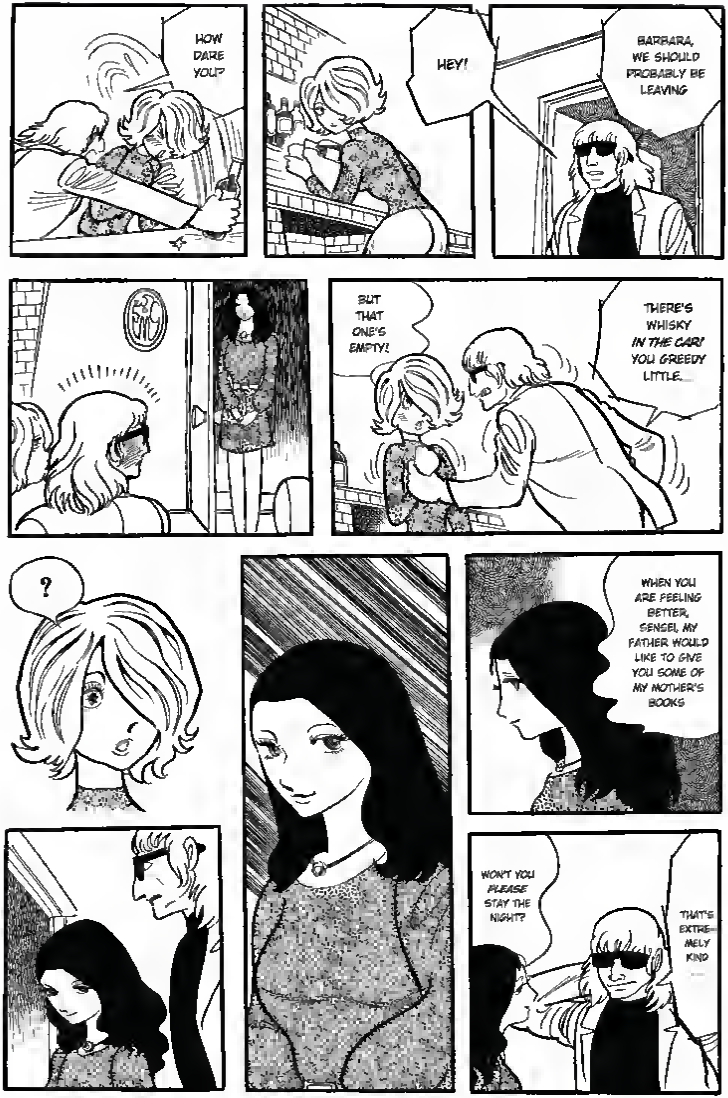

SHŪSAKU ENDŌ HAD GONE TO HIS HOLIDAY HOME IN KARUIZAWA TO WORK ON HIS NEW NOVEL. OTHER COLLEAGUES OF MINE LOCKED THEMSELVES IN HOTEL ROOMS. WITH TOKYO IN AN ENDLESS HEAT WAVE, NOT EVEN WRITERS COULD BEAR TO STAY HOME. EVICTED BY THE HEAT, I DROVE MY CAR TOWARD THE SEA, HOPING TO FIND COOL AIR. BUT ANOTHER HELL WAS WAITING FOR ME.
SHE WAS STILL A COMPLETE NUISANCE SOMETIMES I THOUGHT SHE DID ME MORE HARM THAN GOOD BUT, STRANGELY I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO SEND HER AWAY...

THIS IS WORSE THAN TOKYO.
SENSEI, WE'RE SCREWED IT GOES ON LIKE THIS FOR SEVEN MILES
OF COURSE! THE LETTER WRITER LIVES AROUND HERE
Hiroko Katagai
WAIT
WHAT IF WE TOOK SIDE STREETS?
I DECIDED TO STOP IN AND REST FOR A WHILE. IT WOULD BE TORTURE TO HAVE TO LISTEN TO THE BLATHERINGS OF A DOMESTIC BOOKWORM, BUT I COULD ENDURE IT UNTIL THE TRAFFIC CLEARED UP.
FOR ABOUT A YEAR, A HOUSEWIFE HAD BEEN SENDING ME FAN LETTERS. JUST A WEEK EARLIER, SHE'D SENT ME A LETTER EXPRESSING HER FERVENT DESIRE THAT I SHOULD PAY HER A VISIT IF I WAS EVER NEARBY. IT JUST SO HAPPENED THAT THE ADDRESS WAS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
20-45

I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW EMPTY IT IS HERE.
QUITE AN OLD-FASHIONED HOUSE. THEY'RE LUCKY THE REDEVELOPERS HAVEN'T MADE IT OUT THIS FAR YET
THERE'S SOMETHING EERIE ABOUT THIS WALK, THOUGH... IT GIVES ME THE CHILLS
DOES SOMEONE NAMED HIROKO KATAGAI LIVE HERE?
OH, PARDON ME... IS YOUR WIFE IN?
THAT'S MY WIFE'S NAME...

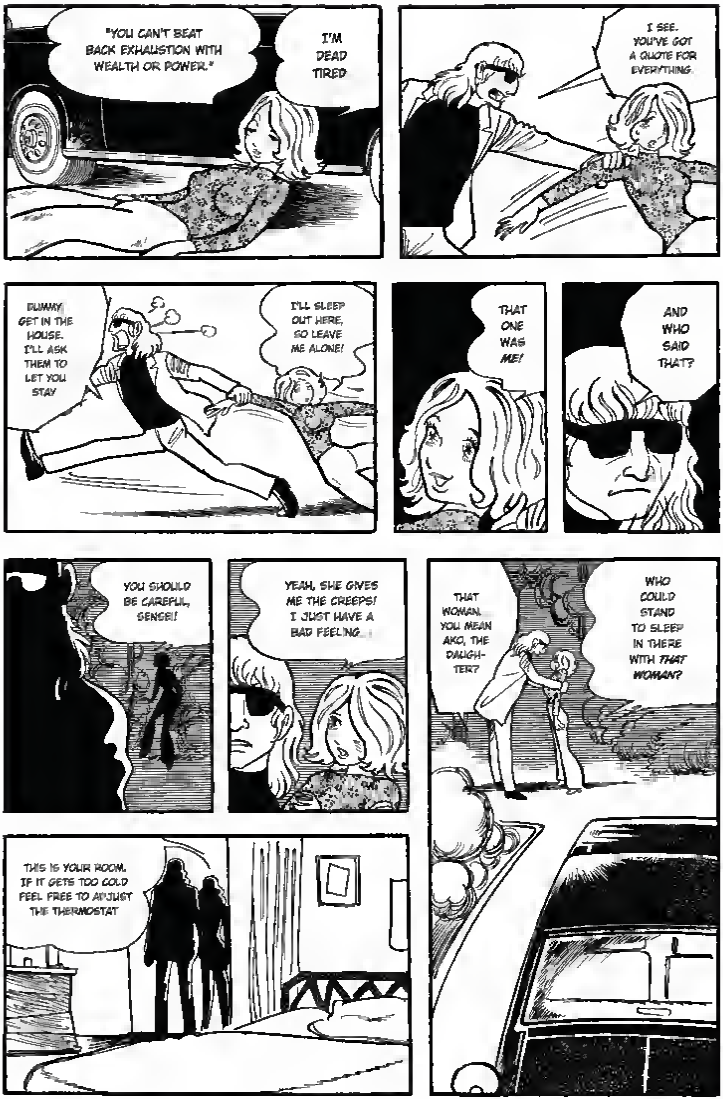
ARE YOU SURE THERE ISN'T SOME MISTAKE?
MY WIFE PASSED AWAY SIX MONTHS AGO.
ACTUALLY, I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM HER A WEEK AGO. MY NAME IS MIKURA.
Yosuke Mikura
NO I'M SURE IT WAS POSTMARKED A WEEK AGO...
AKO! BRING TEA..!
PL-PLEASE COME IN.
THIS IS CERTAINLY MY WIFE'S HAND-WRITING ...!
THIS IS QUITE A SHOCK. HOW DID SHE PASS AWAY, IF YOU DON'T MIND?

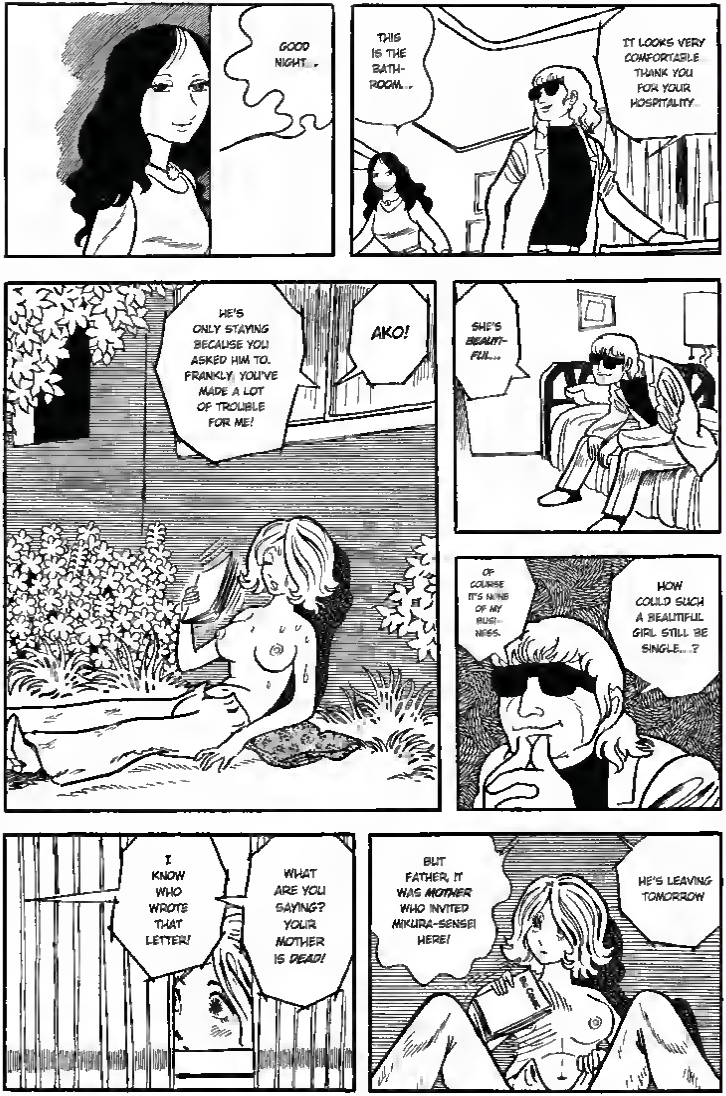
I'VE BEEN RECEIVING LETTERS FROM HER REGULARLY SINCE A YEAR AGO
SIX MONTHS AGO, MY WIFE DIED OF HEART DISEASE SHE ADORED YOUR BOOKS
THIS IS MY ONLY DAUGHTER, AKO...
THIS IS MR. MIKURA, THE WRITER.
NO! THIS IS MY WIFE'S HANDWRITING! AND IT WAS WRITTEN TEN DAYS AGO!
OR PERHAPS SHE POSTED THE LETTER BEFORE SHE DIED ...?
COULD IT BE A BAD JOKE?
BUT SHE CAN'T HAVE WRITTEN ONE A WEEK AGO, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
HOW COULD I BE? MY WIFE HAS BEEN GONE FROM THIS WORLD FOR MONTHS, AND THIS HAPPENS?
A-ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MR. KATAGAI?

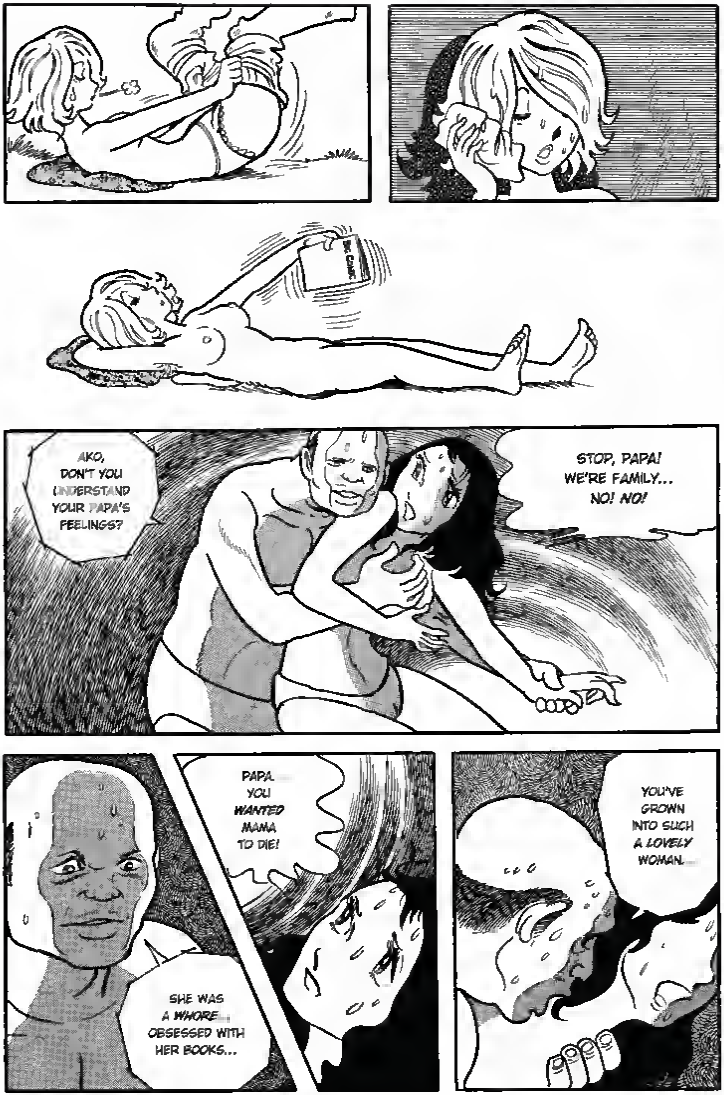

HOW DARE YOU?
HEY!
BARBARA, WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE LEAVING
BUT THAT ONE'S EMPTY!
THERE'S WHISKY *IN THE CAR!* YOU GREEDY LITTLE...
?
WHEN YOU ARE FEELING BETTER, SENSEI, MY FATHER WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU SOME OF MY MOTHER'S BOOKS
WON'T YOU *PLEASE* STAY THE NIGHT?
THAT'S EXTREMELY KIND...

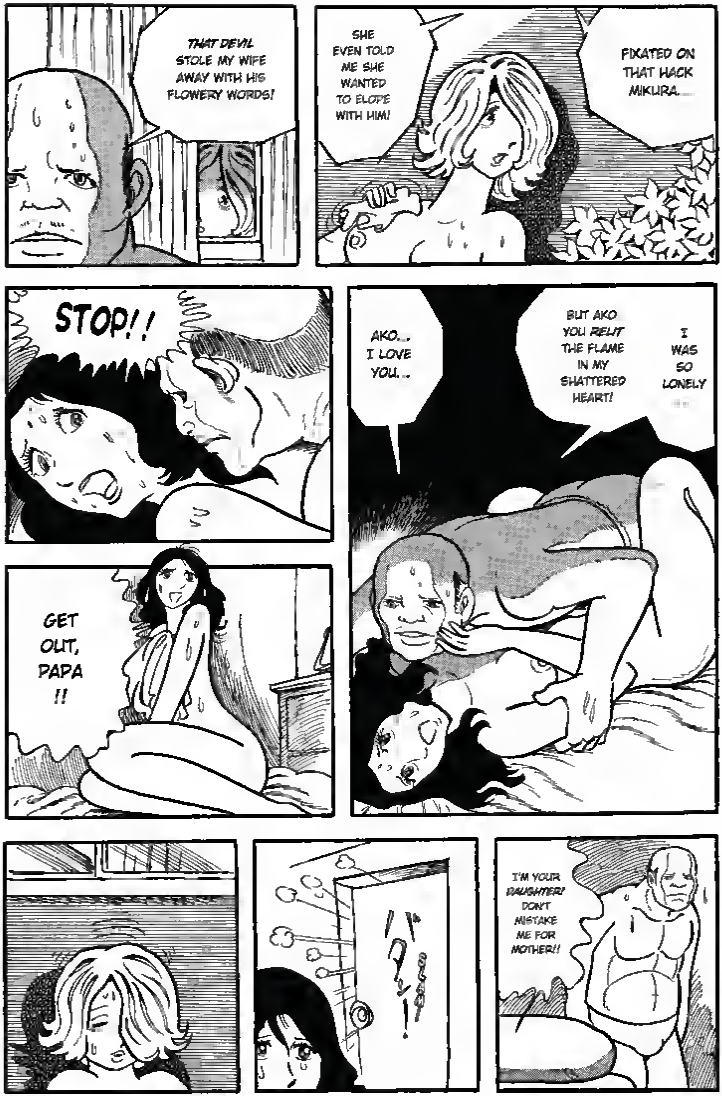
YET ... I'M ASHAMED TO SAY...
I EVEN TRAVELED OVERSEAS TO PURCHASE PARTICULARLY RARE VOLUMES FOR HER.
THERE'S ALSO A POETRY COLLECTION SIGNED BY COCTEAU ... AS YOU CAN SEE MY WIFE WAS A SINGULAR BOOK LOVER.
SHE WAS NOT A VERY GOOD WIFE TO ME.
MR. MIKURA, I WAS ONCE TERRIBLY JEALOUS OF YOU.
NO...
WHY IS THAT? I SUPPOSE SHE MUST HAVE BEEN HARD TO SATISFY...
HAHAHA, I DON'T MIND... I MEET FANS WHO THINK THEY FEEL THAT WAY, BUT IT'S LIKE A FEVER. IT FADES QUICKLY.
SHE EVEN TOLD ME SHE WANTED TO DIVORCE ME AND MARRY YOU...
MY WIFE LOVED YOUR BOOKS WITH SUCH PASSION...

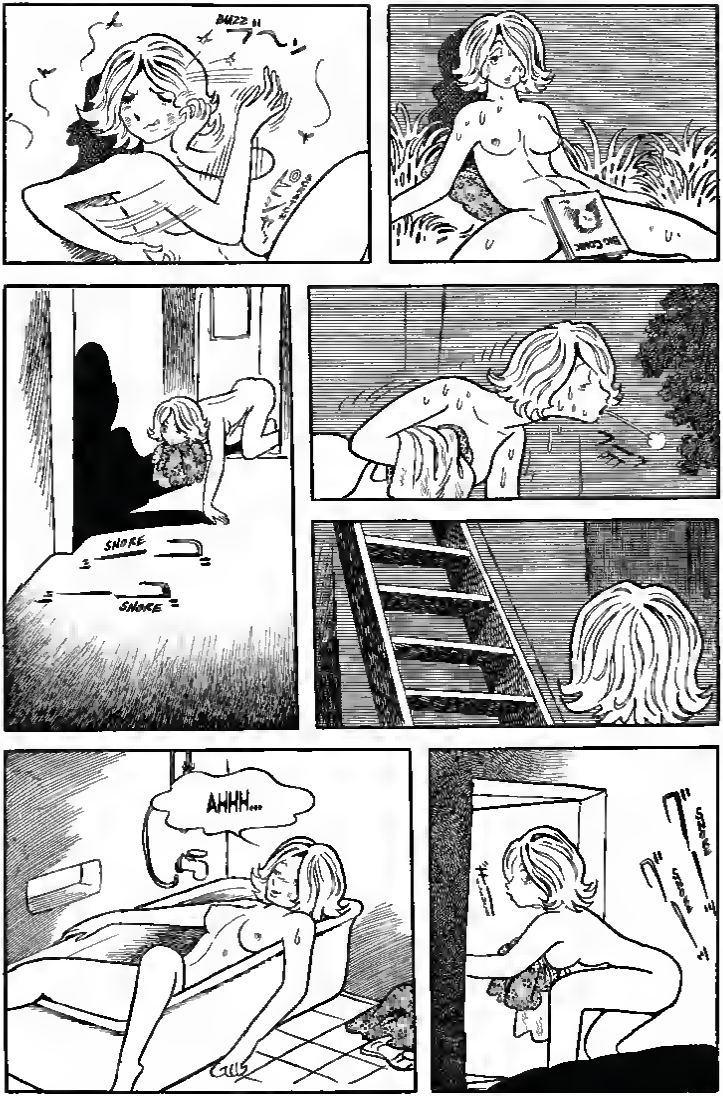
PERHAPS FOR YOUR WORK?
THE UPSTAIRS ROOM IS EMPTY YOU ARE FREE TO USE IT AS LONG AS YOU LIKE.
THAT WAS QUITE A FEAST THANK YOU
THAT WOULD BE A GODSEND! TOKYO IS JUST SO HOT RIGHT NOW...
BARBARA, DID YOU HEAR ME?
BARBARA, IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO HEAD BACK TO TOKYO
"GIVE HIM NONE, AND HE CAN NEVER FIND TRUTH GIVE HIM TOO MUCH, AND IT IS THE SAME." PASCAL.
"TOO MUCH AND TOO LITTLE WINE..."
I'VE GOT SOME SUNTORY OLD AT HOME. YOU CAN OPEN THAT
IDIOT... YOU CAN'T DRINK HERE!
"EVEN WHILE FALLING OFF THE STOVE, A WOMAN HAS TIME TO THINK SEVENTY-SEVEN THOUGHTS." TOLSTOY


"YOU CAN'T BEAT BACK EXHAUSTION WITH WEALTH OR POWER."
I'M DEAD TIRED
I SEE. YOU'VE GOT A QUOTE FOR EVERYTHING.
DUMMY, GET IN THE HOUSE. I'LL ASK THEM TO LET YOU STAY
I'LL SLEEP OUT HERE, SO LEAVE ME ALONE!
THAT ONE WAS ME!
AND WHO SAID THAT?
YOU SHOULD BE CAREFUL, SENSEI!
YEAH, SHE GIVES ME THE CREEPS! I JUST HAVE A BAD FEELING...
THAT WOMAN, YOU MEAN AKO, THE DAUGHTER?
WHO COULD STAND TO SLEEP IN THERE WITH THAT WOMAN?
THIS IS YOUR ROOM. IF IT GETS TOO COLD FEEL FREE TO ADJUST THE THERMOSTAT


GOOD NIGHT...
THIS IS THE BATH-ROOM...
IT LOOKS VERY COMFORTABLE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.
AKO!
HE'S ONLY STAYING BECAUSE YOU ASKED HIM TO. FRANKLY, YOU'VE MADE A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR ME!
SHE'S BEAUTI-FUL...
OF COURSE IT'S NONE OF MY BUSI-NESS.
HOW COULD SUCH A BEAUTIFUL GIRL STILL BE SINGLE...?
I KNOW WHO WROTE THAT LETTER!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? YOUR MOTHER IS DEAD!
BUT FATHER, IT WAS MOTHER WHO INVITED MIKURA-SENSEI HERE!
HE'S LEAVING TOMORROW


AKO, DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR PAPA'S FEELINGS?
STOP, PAPA! WE'RE FAMILY... NO! NO!
PAPA, YOU WANTED MAMA TO DIE!
SHE WAS A WHORE... OBSESSED WITH HER BOOKS...
YOU'VE GROWN INTO SUCH A LOVELY WOMAN...


THAT DEVIL STOLE MY WIFE AWAY WITH HIS FLOWERY WORDS!
SHE EVEN TOLD ME SHE WANTED TO ELOPE WITH HIM!
FIXATED ON THAT HACK MIKURA...
STOP!!
AKO... I LOVE YOU...
BUT AKO YOU *RELIT* THE FLAME IN MY SHATTERED HEART!
I WAS SO LONELY
GET OUT, PAPA !!
?!
I'M YOUR *DAUGHTER!* DON'T MISTAKE ME FOR *MOTHER!!*


BUZZ
SNORE
SNORE
AHHH...

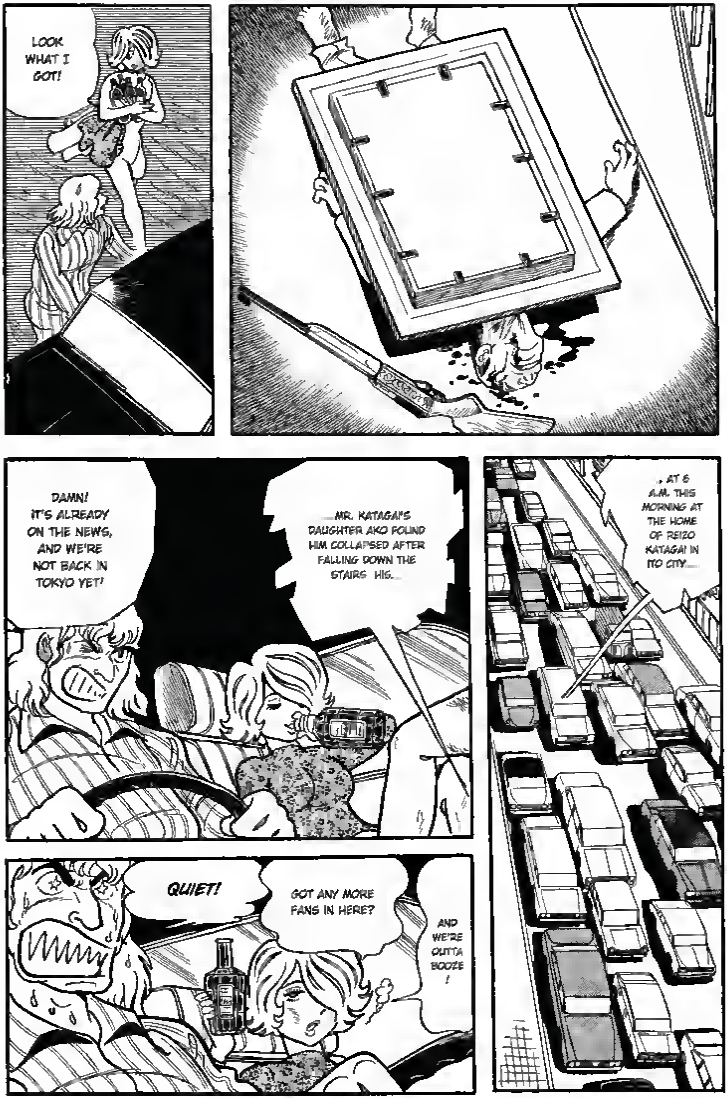
STAB!
IS THAT YOU, MISS AKO? WHY ARE YOU HERE SO LATE?
SENSEI
I THOUGHT SO. BUT YOUR FATHER WAS CONVINCED IT WAS YOUR MOTHER'S HANDWRITING
I'M SORRY, SENSEI. MY MOTHER'S LETTER. I WROTE IT.

NO...
THINGS WEREN'T GOING WELL BETWEEN YOUR PARENTS?
SHE DIED RESENTING MY FATHER.
WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE, SHE DICTATED EVERYTHING TO ME. MY MOTHER'S HANDWRITING IS MY HANDWRITING
HM.
EVERY DAY, HE WOULD SHOUT AT HER ABOUT YOU.
MY FATHER IS A DEEPLY JEALOUS MAN. HE KEPT MY MOTHER LOCKED UP IN HER ROOM LIKE A CAGED BIRD...
I WORSHIP YOU, SENSEI!
YOU ARE THE LIGHT AT DAYBREAK, THE GLIMMER IN A PRECIOUS STONE! YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AND SUBLIME!
YOU JUST DON'T SEE IT YOURSELF...
YOU'RE WRONG! YOUR WORK IS YOUR SOUL, SENSEI!
NOW, WAIT A MOMENT... I'M FLATTERED, BUT YOU ONLY KNOW MY WORK, NOT ME.
I'VE READ ALL YOUR BOOKS.
SENSEI, I...
I'VE FALLEN UNBEARABLY IN LOVE WITH YOU
I GREW TO ADMIRE YOU, AND NOW...

I INHERITED EVERYTHING MY MOTHER WAS!
I OFFER MYSELF TO YOU IN HER PLACE
STRANGE
I'VE HEARD THOSE WORDS BEFORE...
YES, I REMEMBER! THEY WERE IN A LETTER FROM YOUR MOTHER!
HOLD ME, SENSEI!

SO, MIKUNA! MY WIFE WASN'T ENOUGH FOR YOU? NOW YOU'RE TAKING MY DAUGHTER?
I KNEW IT!
WAIT! I HAVEN'T DONE
I'LL KILL YOU..
SHIT!
SENSEI, THIS WAY!
BOO!

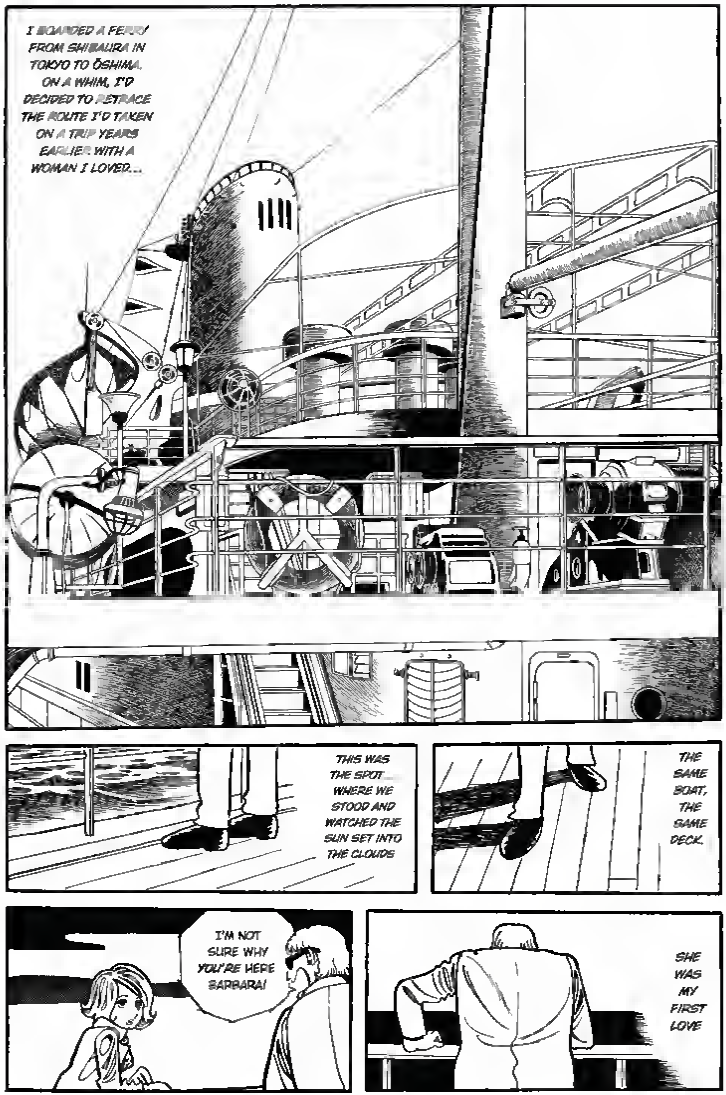
HUK!
CLATTER
YOU'RE DEAD!
WAAAH!
CLATTER
WHAK
BARBARA, RUN!
KRAK


LOOK WHAT I GOT!
DAMN! IT'S ALREADY ON THE NEWS, AND WE'RE NOT BACK IN TOKYO YET!
...MR. KATAGAI'S DAUGHTER AKO FOUND HIM COLLAPSED AFTER FALLING DOWN THE STAIRS HIS...
...AT 6 A.M. THIS MORNING AT THE HOME OF REIZO KATAGAI IN ITO CITY...
QUIET!
GOT ANY MORE FANS IN HERE?
AND WE'RE OUTTA BOOZE!

# Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER FIVE.

## THE DEMON ON THE DUNE

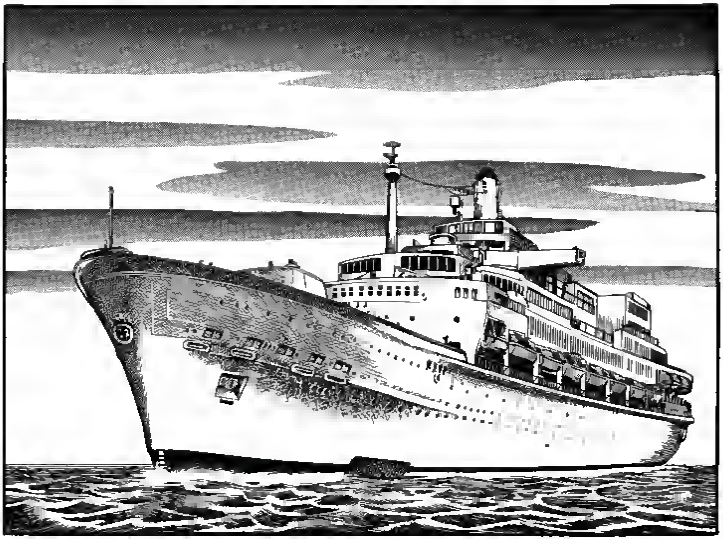

I BOARDED A FERRY FROM SHIBAURA IN TOKYO TO ŌSHIMA. ON A WHIM, I'D DECIDED TO RETRACE THE ROUTE I'D TAKEN ON A TRIP YEARS EARLIER WITH A WOMAN I LOVED...
THIS WAS THE SPOT... WHERE WE STOOD AND WATCHED THE SUN SET INTO THE CLOUDS
THE SAME BOAT, THE SAME DECK.
I'M NOT SURE WHY YOU'RE HERE BARBARA!
SHE WAS MY FIRST LOVE

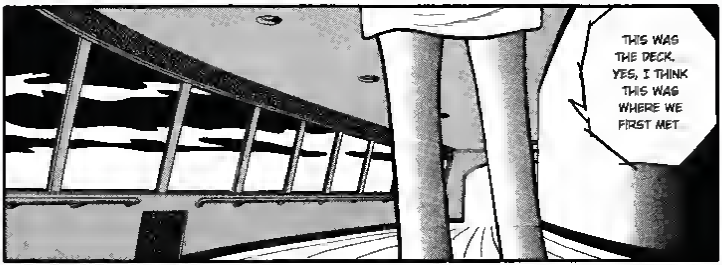
GO AWAY! STOP RUINING MY MEMORIES!
THEY SAY THE SKY IS LIKE A WOMAN'S LOVE. AND THE SEA IS LIKE A MAN'S BUT THERE IS A BORDER SEPARATING THEM.
BUT IT'S SO ROMANTIC!
UGH! I SHOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT YOU ALONG...
BALZAC SAID THAT ONLY THE LAST LOVE OF A WOMAN SATISFIES THE FIRST LOVE OF A MAN...
THAT'S RIGHT! IT WAS THIS ROOM..
SNOB!
THIS WAS THE ROOM, WHERE I BASKED IN HER LOVE LIKE MOONLIGHT...
GET OUT!

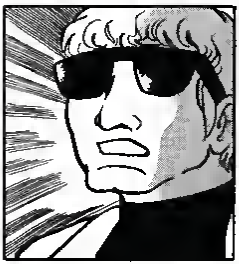
HMPH
Bar Monte
GIN.
A BOTTLE OF BEER.
WHAT YOU GOT A PROBLEM?
DUMB KID...
STRAIGHT UP AS USUAL!
THEN DRAG ME OFF TO THE COPS! I BET YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE ANY ON HERE SERVES YOU RIGHT!
I'M SORRY, YOU CAN'T DO THAT HERE.
LOOK AT THIS AND TELL ME I'M A KID!

AND SHE WAS... NINETEEN, I THINK.
I WAS STILL A STUDENT AT WASEDA UNIVERSITY...
THIS DESK IS JUST AS IT WAS. HERE IS WHERE I TENDERLY GRASPED HER HAND...
AS FLIES SWARM ABOUT THE ROTTING FLESH?
MUST YOU CLING VAINLY TO THE CORPSE OF AN OLD KILL...
BUT... WHAT CAN YOU DO WHEN THERE ARE NO LIONS LEFT TO HUNT?
OH! A FINISHED BOOK IS LIKE A LION KILLED. BACK THEN I WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN HUNTING DOWN THE NEXT LION... THAT IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ARTIST.
YOU'RE REFERRING TO YOUR DILEMMA?
I WAS ENTRANCED BY MY FIRST LOVE.
AS A STUDENT I BURNED WITH PASSION FOR EVERYTHING I DID...
YES! MY DILEMMA! MY MIND IS A TROPHY, FULL ONLY OF STRAW!

IF YOU RETRACED YOUR STEPS MAYBE YOU COULD RESOLVE YOUR DILEMMA.
BARBARA, WE'LL GO ON A TRIP!
OF COURSE! YOU'RE RIGHT! A TRIP!
ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO TAKE ALL THAT ALCOHOL ON THE BOAT?
HAIR OF THE DOG IT'LL LAST ME TILL WE GET TO THE WHARF
WHY MUST I GO EVERYWHERE WITH THIS DRUNKARD BY MY SIDE?
YES, IT WAS THE LOVE OF A LIFETIME... OUR MEETING WAS SO DRAMATIC...
I REMEMBER. IT WAS ON THE BOAT TO ŌSHIMA I FOUND HER ON THE SIDE-DECK.
WE CLIMBED THAT SANDY HILL ON THE ISLAND




THIS WAS THE DECK. YES, I THINK THIS WAS WHERE WE FIRST MET.



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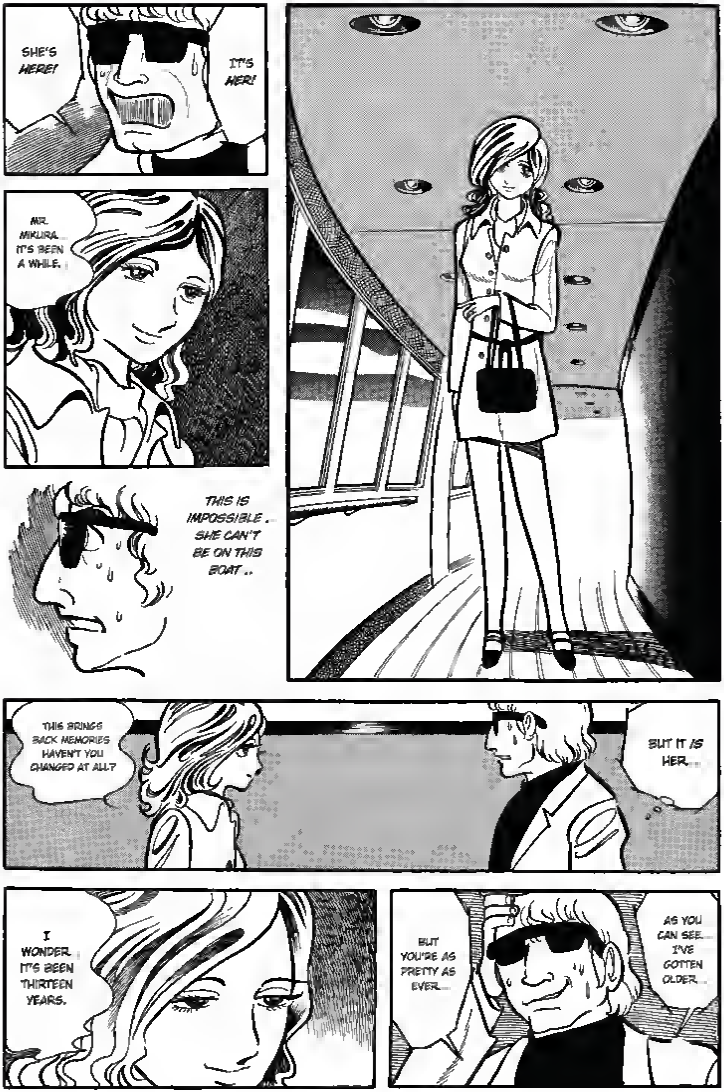
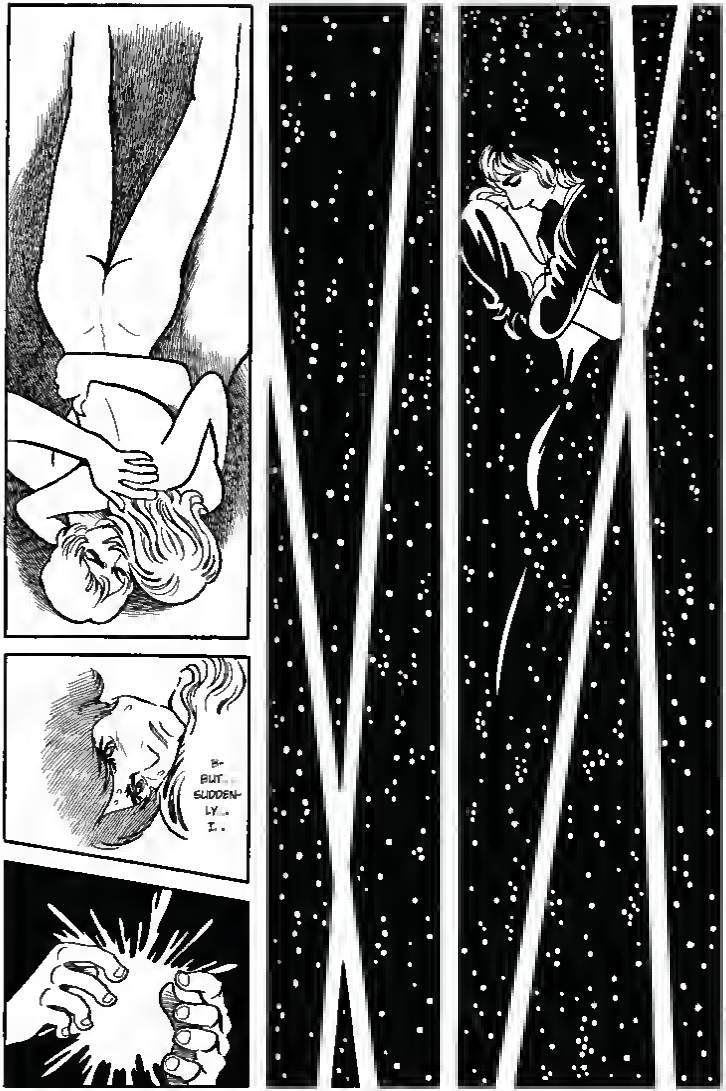
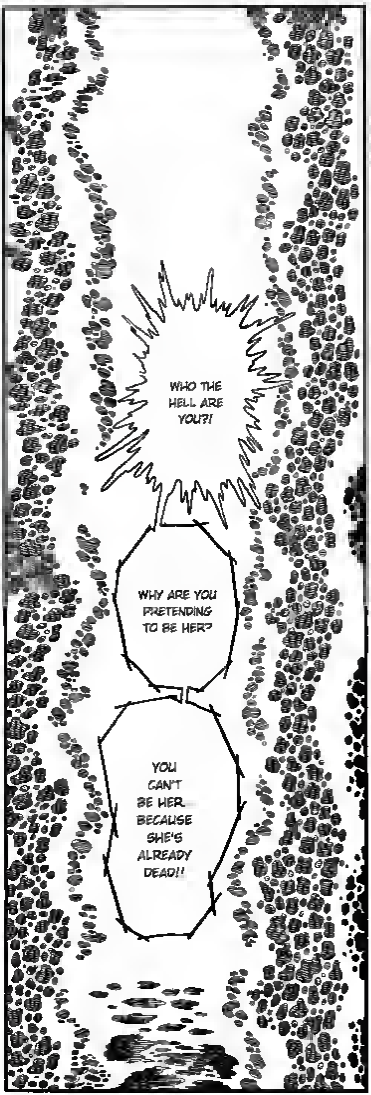

SHE'S HERE!
IT'S HER!
MR. MIKURA... IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE. SHE CAN'T BE ON THIS BOAT..
THIS BRINGS BACK MEMORIES HAVEN'T YOU CHANGED AT ALL?
BUT IT IS HER...
I WONDER. IT'S BEEN THIRTEEN YEARS.
BUT YOU'RE AS PRETTY AS EVER...
AS YOU CAN SEE... I'VE GOTTEN OLDER...

YES, YOU'RE FAMOUS NOW YOU HAD REAL TALENT.
THIRTEEN YEARS. I LEFT COLLEGE, WENT TO WORK FOR THAT PUBLISHING COMPANY, AND THEN STARTED WRITING.
OH? SO AM I.
JUST WANDERING THROUGH MEMORIES.
WHAT BRINGS YOU TO ŌSHIMA?
I HAD ABSOLUTELY NO SELF-CONFIDENCE, THOUGH
BUT YOU'RE BEGINNING TO REMEMBER, AREN'T YOU?
WE BOTH FORGOT ALL ABOUT EACH OTHER.
NO I CAN'T GO WITH YOU! I HAVE TO LEAVE.
I CLIMBED MOUNT MIHARA WITH YOU!
YES, I'VE REMEMBERED SOMETHING TERRIBLE!
I LOVED YOU. I WANTED TO WRAP YOU UP LIKE A SNOWBALL.
YES, YOU DID

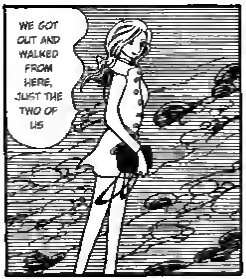

B-
BUT...
SUDDEN-
LY...
I..

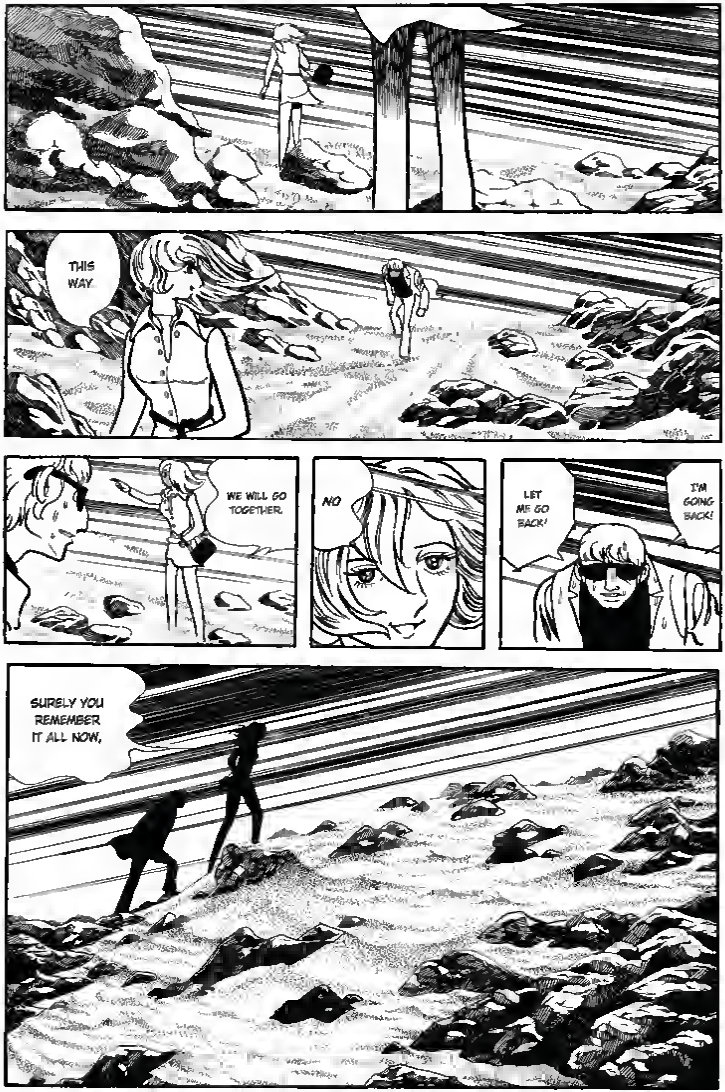

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!
WHY ARE YOU PRETENDING TO BE HER?
YOU CAN'T BE HER, BECAUSE SHE'S ALREADY DEAD!!

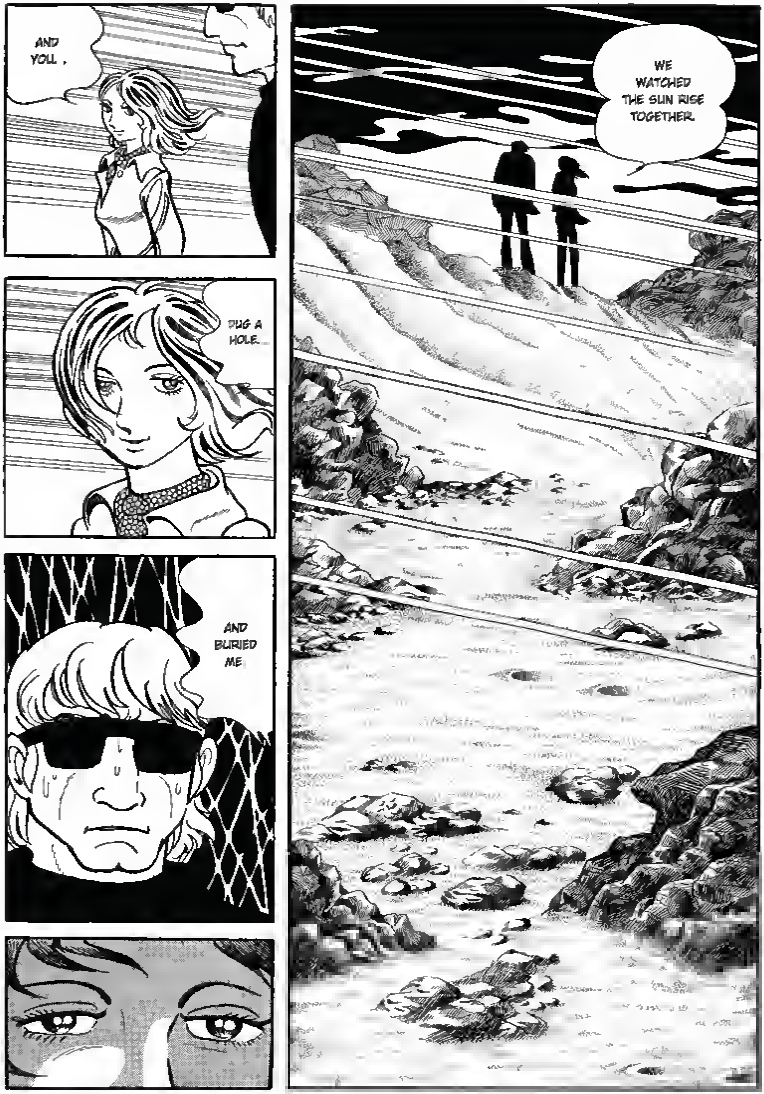
MOUNT MIHARA
VOLCANIC TRAIL HEAD

THE WIND CARRIES FORTH THE SACRED FLAME.
EVERYTHING IS AS IT WAS THAT DAY.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?


WE GOT OUT AND WALKED FROM HERE, JUST THE TWO OF US


THIS WAY
WE WILL GO TOGETHER.
NO
LET ME GO BACK!
I'M GOING BACK!
SURELY YOU REMEMBER IT ALL NOW,

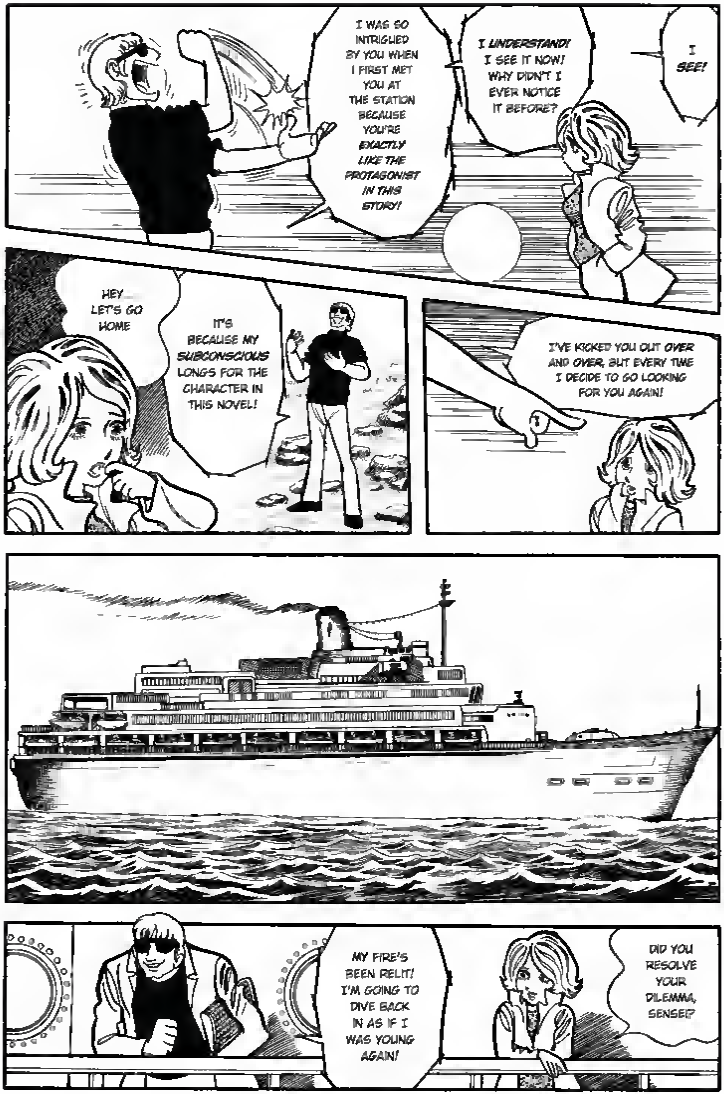

AND YOU ,
DUG A HOLE...
AND BURIED ME
WE WATCHED THE SUN RISE TOGETHER.

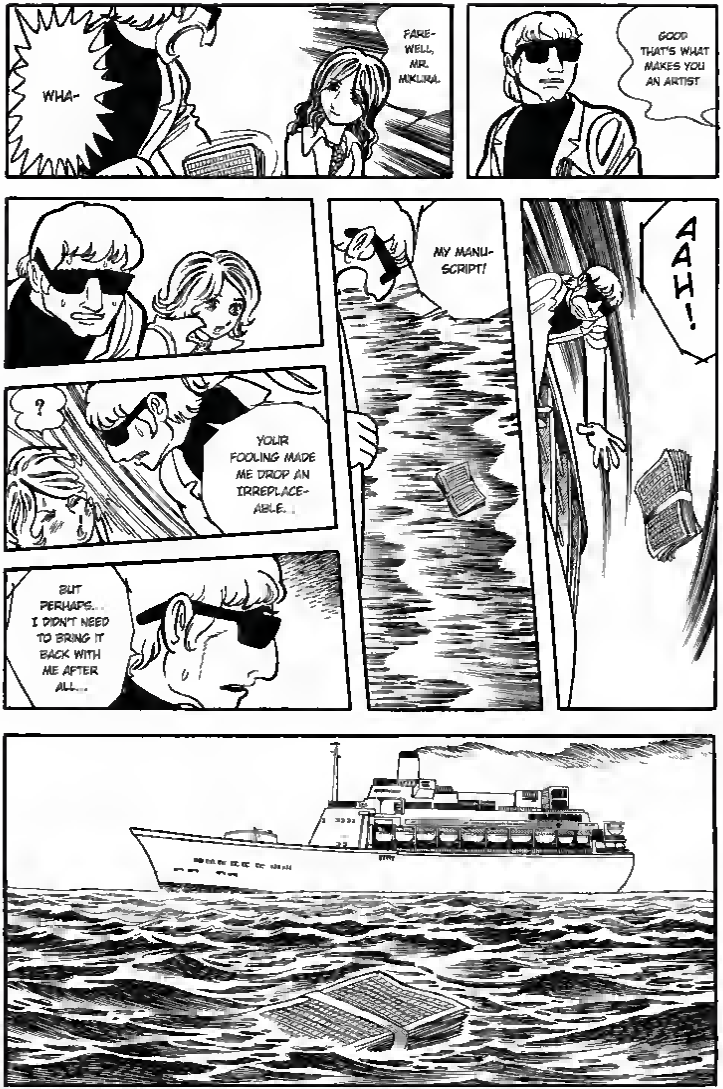
.....
WHY NOT DIG ME UP?
AND THAT'S WHY I CLENCHED MY TEETH AND BURIED YOU!
I LOVED YOU. IT WAS BECAUSE I LOVED YOU THAT I WANTED TO LOCK YOU AWAY FOREVER IN MY MEMORY JUST AS YOU WERE....
NO!
DIG
DIG!
LEAVE ME ALONE. IT WAS THIRTEEN YEARS AGO!
AND FACE WHAT YOU DID THIRTEEN YEARS AGO
...
...

AH!

HAVE I DECAYED?
IT'S HERE!
BUT I WAS TERRIFIED THAT AFTER THE YEARS HAD PASSED...
I WOULD READ THIS FRAGMENT OF MY CHILDHOOD AGAIN, AND I WOULD DESPAIR.
SO I CLENCHED MY TEETH AND BURIED IT HERE!
I... WROTE THIS ON THE BOAT I EXHAUSTED MYSELF FINISHING IT WRITING IT DUG DEEP INTO MY OWN SOUL...
MY LITERARY MAIDEN VOYAGE...

THAT'S RIGHT. BUT READING IT NOW, I SEE THAT IT'S STILL OVERFLOWING WITH VIBRANCY AND YOUTH! MY INEXPERIENCE WASN'T A PROBLEM AT ALL!
YOU REALLY WERE A ROMANTIC
AND SHE IS YOU.
THE WOMAN IN THIS STORY IS MY IDEAL WOMAN
WHAT? WHY'D YOU DRAG ME OUT HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, AND WHAT ARE YOU CHATTERING ABOUT?
I'M COLD!
BARB-ARA?!
OF COURSE! BARBARA! HAHAHAHAAA! HAHAHAHAHA HAHAHAHA...


I WAS SO INTRIGUED BY YOU WHEN I FIRST MET YOU AT THE STATION BECAUSE YOU'RE EXACTLY LIKE THE PROTAGONIST IN THIS STORY!
I UNDERSTAND! I SEE IT NOW! WHY DIDN'T I EVER NOTICE IT BEFORE?
I SEE!
HEY... LET'S GO HOME
IT'S BECAUSE MY SUBCONSCIOUS LONGS FOR THE CHARACTER IN THIS NOVEL!
I'VE KICKED YOU OUT OVER AND OVER, BUT EVERY TIME I DECIDE TO GO LOOKING FOR YOU AGAIN!
MY FIRE'S BEEN RELIT! I'M GOING TO DIVE BACK IN AS IF I WAS YOUNG AGAIN!
DID YOU RESOLVE YOUR DILEMMA, SENSEI?

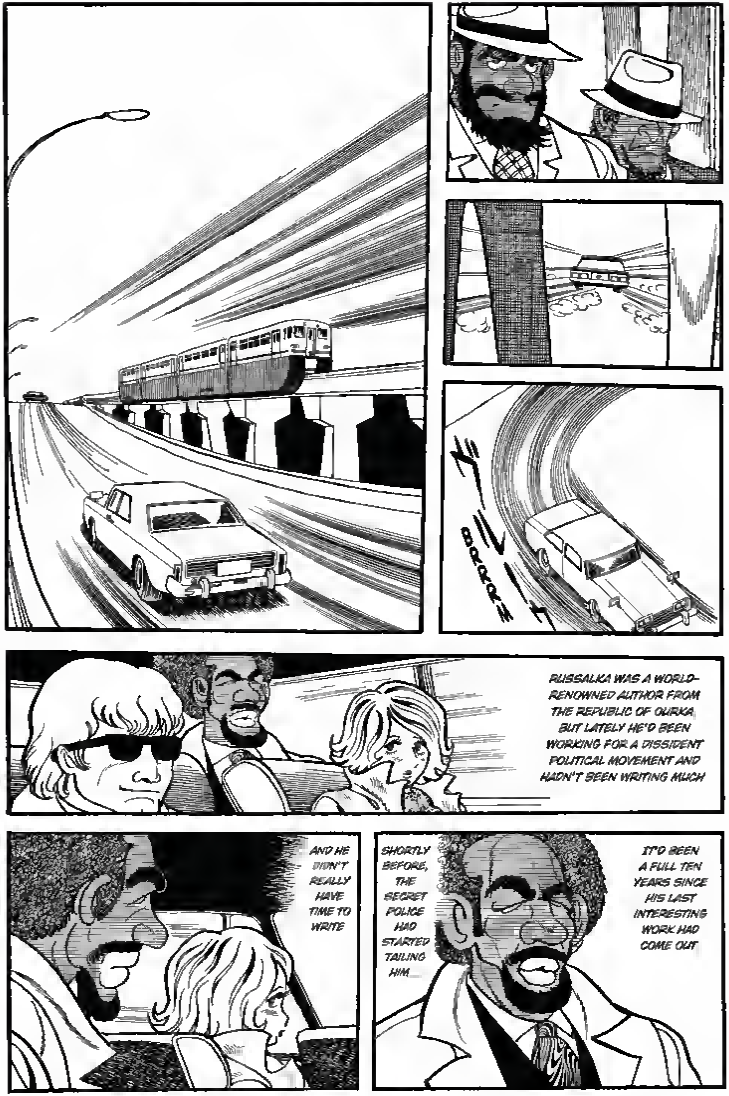

WHA-
FARE-WELL, MR. MIKURA.
GOOD THAT'S WHAT MAKES YOU AN ARTIST
AAH!
MY MANU-SCRIPT!
?
YOUR FOOLING MADE ME DROP AN IRREPLACE-ABLE..
BUT PERHAPS... I DIDN'T NEED TO BRING IT BACK WITH ME AFTER ALL...

# Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER SIX:
## THE BLACK SINNER

BOEING 747
THAT DAY, MY ACQUAINTANCE SWANDA RUSSALKA HAD SUDDENLY AND QUIETLY ARRIVED IN JAPAN
RUSSALKA! WELCOME TO JAPAN. I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE THE INTERNATIONAL JAPANESE CONFERENCE, RIGHT?
BONJOUR, MONSIEUR MIKURA!
HELP MR. RUSSALKA CARRY HIS LUGGAGE TO THE CAR.
EXILE? NON, NON!
I HOPE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FORGET ALL ABOUT YOUR EXILE AND ENJOY YOUR TIME IN JAPAN.
HEY, BARBARA!
I'M FREE. I DIDN'T COME TO JAPAN TO DEAL WITH MY POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

BAR...BA...RA!
I'LL GO GET THE CAR OUT OF THE PARKING LOT.
PLEASE AFTER YOU!


RUSSALKA WAS A WORLD-RENOWNED AUTHOR FROM THE REPUBLIC OF QURKA BUT LATELY HE'D BEEN WORKING FOR A DISSIDENT POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND HADN'T BEEN WRITING MUCH
AND HE DIDN'T REALLY HAVE TIME TO WRITE
SHORTLY BEFORE, THE SECRET POLICE HAD STARTED TAILING HIM...
IT'D BEEN A FULL TEN YEARS SINCE HIS LAST INTERESTING WORK HAD COME OUT

I'LL GO PUT THE CAR IN THE GARAGE BARBARA, SHOW HIM TO MY ROOM.
BARBARA... WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY?
...
...
I CAN'T WRITE WITHOUT YOU!
SINCE YOU LEFT, I HAVEN'T WRITTEN ANYTHING WORTHWHILE. I'VE EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT GIVING UP THE CRAFT!
PLEASE, COME BACK TO ME.
NO I HATE YOU.
BUT WHY DO YOU HATE ME?
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW THAT, BETTER THAN ANYONE

LAST YEAR I BROUGHT YOU TO JAPAN WITH ME FOR THE CONFERENCE...
AND IN KYOTO I LOST TRACK OF YOU. YOU RAN AWAY FROM ME!
NOW I SEE YOU'VE GONE TO YŌSUKE MIKUIRA. WHY DID YOU CHOOSE HIM?
NO REASON. YOU JUST WEREN'T PAYING ATTENTION.
BARBARA, DON'T JUST STAND AROUND, TAKE HIM UP TO THE ROOM!
SHE'S JUST A BUM, BUT SOMEHOW SHE ENDED UP LIVING WITH ME...
YOU HAVE SADDLED YOURSELF WITH AN UNBELIEVABLE BURDEN.
SHEESH, IT'S JUST LUGGAGE.

BARBARA! HOW MANY OF YOUR BUM FRIENDS DID YOU INVITE OVER WHILE I WAS OUT? FIVE? SIX?
WHAT IS THIS *MESS*...?
CLEAN THIS *UP!*
IT WAS *AN OLD FRIEND!* WE JUST WANTED TO GET A LITTLE DRUNK.
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!
TRY ONE OUT
THEY'RE HANDMADE NOSE-PICKERS! THEY WERE JUST SITTING IN A STORE IN AOZORA FOR 500 YEN EACH!
WHY, YOU...
*AND* TOOK ALL THE CHANGE OUT OF MY DEPOSIT BOX!
YOU DRANK ALL THE CANS IN THE FRIDGE...
LITTLE THIEF!
WHAT ARE THEY?
I'M NOT A THIEF! WE LEFT THESE FOR YOU

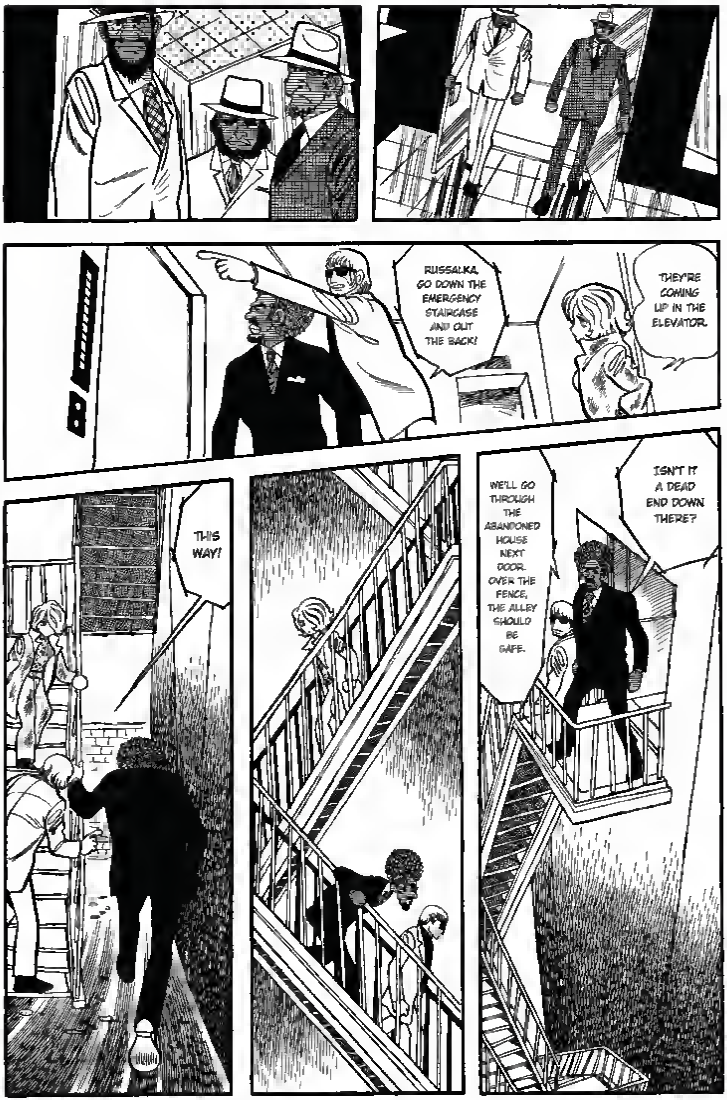
GET OUT... BEFORE I REALLY LOSE MY TEMPER!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOU!
SHE SAYS THAT NOW BUT SHE'LL BE BACK.
FINE! THIS ISN'T THE ONLY PLACE I CAN STAY, YOU KNOW!
NOT PARTICULARLY.
MONSIEUR... HAS YOUR WORK PROGRESSED SINCE SHE ARRIVED?
IN ANY CASE, I'M SORRY I CAN'T OFFER YOU BETTER ACCOMMODATIONS.
YOU ARE BLESSED
HAVE YOU WRITTEN ANYTHING GOOD?
HMM...
WHAT? YOU MEAN HER NATIONALITY?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT BARBARA IS?

WHAT, IS THAT HER REAL NAME?
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
THAT WOMAN IS A MUSE
NON! A MUSE IS A GODDESS OF ART. THEY ARE THE DAUGHTERS OF JUPITER, AND LONG AGO POETS WOULD INVOKE THEIR NAMES AT THE START OF A NEW WORK, TO PRAY FOR DIVINE PROTECTION AND SUCCESS
BARBARA IS THE YOUNGEST OF THE MUSES.
BARBARA, A MUSE?
HA HA HA HA HA HA
THAT'S A BAD JOKE!
HOW MUCH DID YOU DRINK ON THE PLANE?!
PFF
PFF
PFF

SURELY YOUR LUCK HAS IMPROVED SINCE BARBARA CAME!
YOU STILL DO NOT REALIZE!
YES! MUSES APPEAR TO ARTISTS IN MANY FORMS!
I FOUND HER DRUNK AND COLLAPSED IN SHINJUKU STATION!
RUSSALKA, LISTEN.
WHAT ?
UNTIL ONE YEAR AGO BARBARA LIVED WITH ME
A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY!
THIS MUST BE A MISUNDERSTANDING
NO... SHE APPEARED AS A BLACK WOMAN.
AND SHE LOOKED THE SAME BACK THEN?
HER APPEARANCE CHANGES DEPENDING ON HER COMPANION.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
BUT IT WASN'T UNTIL SHE LEFT MY SIDE THAT I RECOGNIZED WHAT SHE TRULY WAS
AND... I WROTE "DAYBREAK HILL" AND "LEANNE"... WORK AFTER WORK FLOWED FROM MY PEN WITH CONFIDENCE.

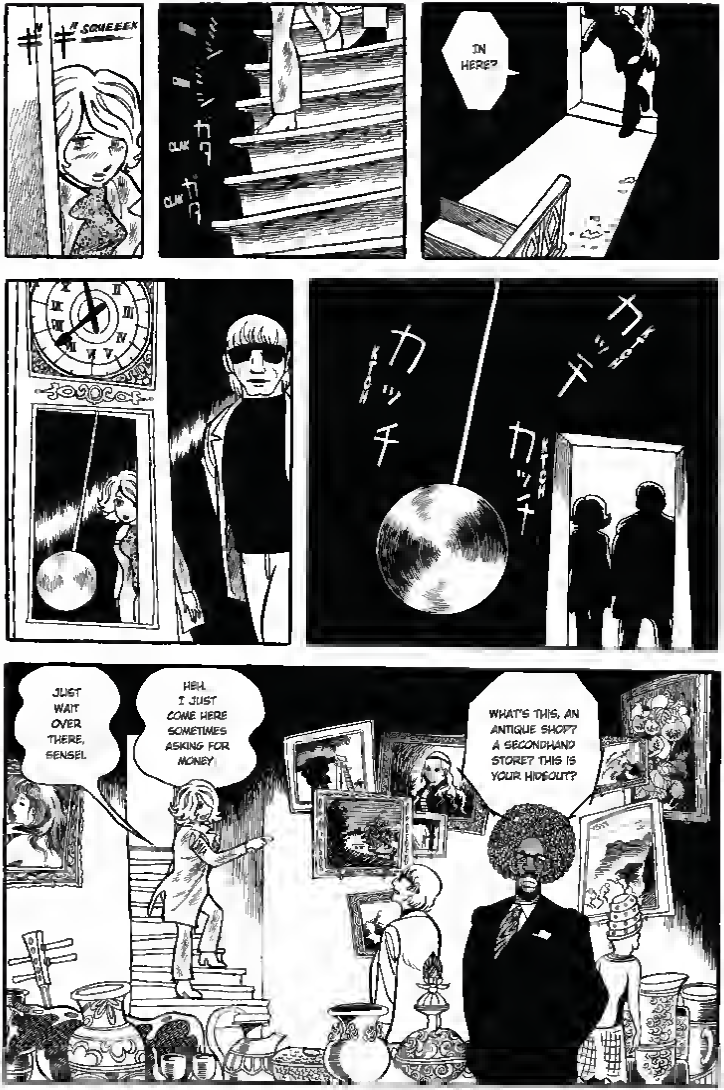
IRRESPONSIBLE, CAPRICIOUS, NOSY AND WILD RIGHT?
BUT BARBARA IS DRUNK, LAZY, FILTHY, RUDE.
YOU'VE GOT AN OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION.
I SWEAR IT'S THE TRUTH!
I'M TELLING YOU RUSSALKA, YOUR WOMAN CAN'T BE THE SAME PERSON AS THAT INGRATE.
NO, THERE'S NO MISTAKE... SHE IS THE MUSE!
ART HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY..
THAT'S HOW A MUSE IS.
THIS IS GOING NOWHERE
I GIVE UP.
OH! HERE'S YOUR MUSE NOW
MY CRAZY LITTLE MUSE ?
WHY HAVE YOU COME CRAWLING BACK THIS TIME.

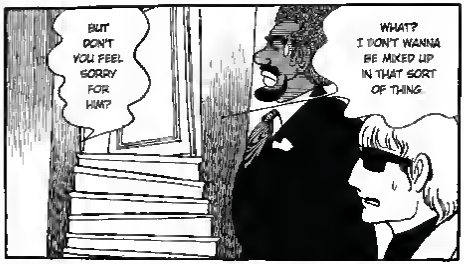
WHAT ?
THEY FOLLOWED RUSCALKA-SENSEI HERE.
THERE ARE SOME STRANGE PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE BUILDING
I KNOW, I KNOW, I KNOW!
YOU MAY SCOLD ME BUT I'VE DEDICATED MY LIFE TO TAKING A STAND AGAINST MY GOVERNMENT.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH AN ARTIST FIGHTING FOR REVOLUTION?
SENSEI, THOSE HIT MEN FOLLOWED YOU ALL THE WAY FROM THE AIRPORT!
... ...
I NEVER LIKED THAT ABOUT YOU.
YOU COULD'VE FOCUSED ON WRITING... BUT INSTEAD YOU GOT MIXED UP IN POLITICS...

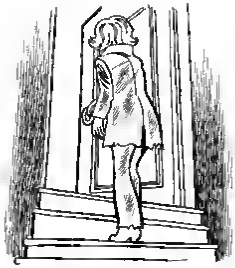

RUSSALKA, GO DOWN THE EMERGENCY STAIRCASE AND CUT THE BACK!
THEY'RE COMING UP IN THE ELEVATOR.
THIS WAY!
WE'LL GO THROUGH THE ABANDONED HOUSE NEXT DOOR. OVER THE FENCE, THE ALLEY SHOULD BE SAFE.
ISN'T IT A DEAD END DOWN THERE?

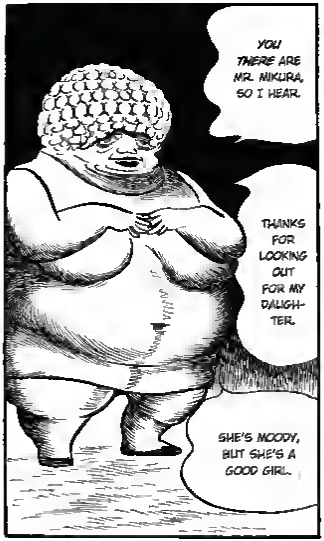
POP!
ガチ ガチ CHK CHK
LOOK OUT!
DAMN, THEY FOUND US!

WELL THEN, I DON'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED...
IS THERE A POLICE STATION NEARBY? WE'RE BEING CHASED!
I HAVE FAMILY LIVING NEARBY, BUT... IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'RE ACCUSTOMED TO, SENSEI.
THAT'S FINE! WE JUST NEED TO HIDE...
LONG ENOUGH TO ASK THE POLICE FOR PROTECTION!
I THOUGHT JAPAN WAS A LAW-ABIDING COUNTRY!
OVER HERE!


SQUEEEEK
CLAK
CLAK
IN HERE?
JUST WAIT OVER THERE, SENSEI.
HEH. I JUST COME HERE SOMETIMES ASKING FOR MONEY.
WHAT'S THIS, AN ANTIQUE SHOP? A SECONDHAND STORE? THIS IS YOUR HIDEOUT?


BUT DON'T YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HIM?
WHAT? I DON'T WANNA BE MIXED UP IN THAT SORT OF THING.




YOU THERE ARE MR. MIKURA, SO I HEAR.
THANKS FOR LOOKING OUT FOR MY DAUGHTER.
SHE'S MOODY, BUT SHE'S A GOOD GIRL.

I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHERE YOU'RE FROM, BUT I DON'T WANT TO GET MIXED UP IN ANY CROOKED DEALINGS.

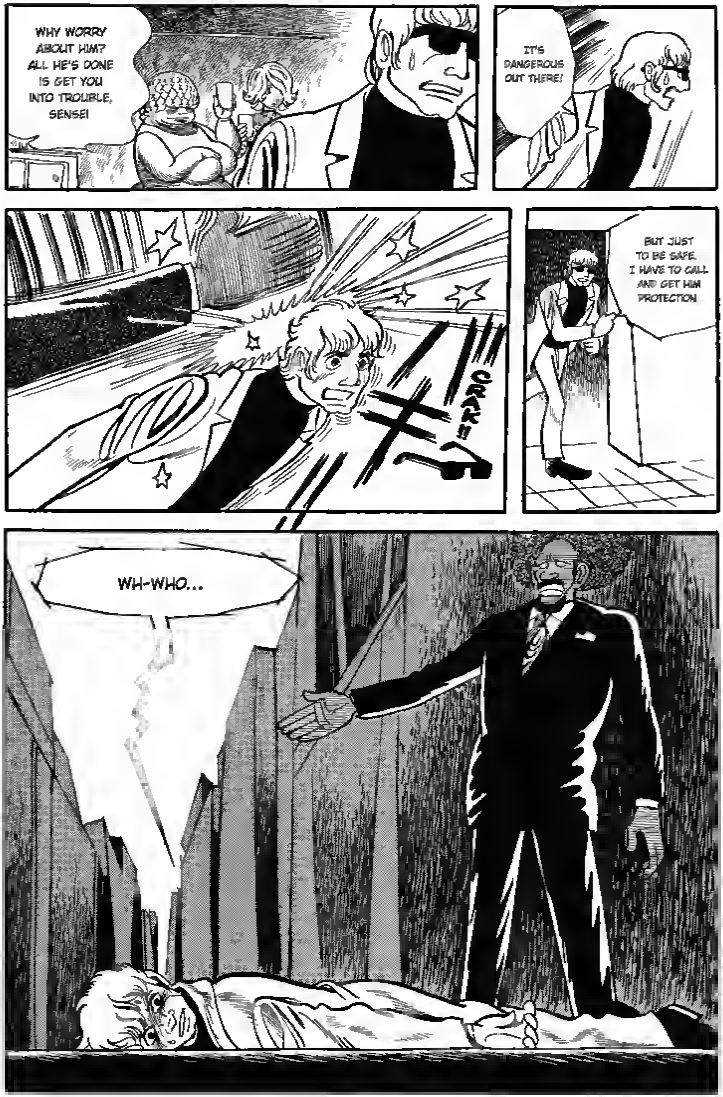
THAT'S RIGHT. MY NAME IS MNEMOSYNE.
YOU ARE BARBARA'S MOTHER?

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO POKED YOUR NOSE INTO POLITICS IT'S NOT RIGHT
WE'VE GOT SOME LIKE YOU IN JAPAN TOO. OF COURSE...

THAT SCUM THERE..

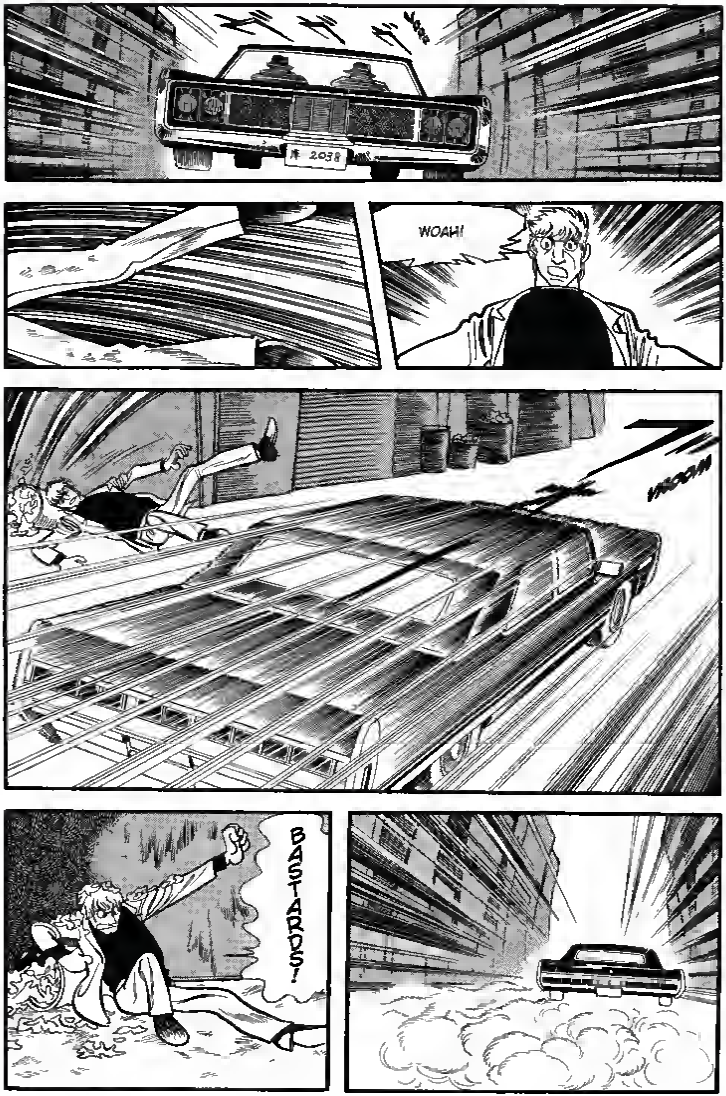
VERY WELL. FOR YOUR SAKE, I WILL SHELTER THAT SCUM.
I NEVER IMAGINED THERE WAS A PLACE LIKE THIS IN THE BACK ALLEYS OF SHINJUKU.
THAT PILE THERE IS WHAT PICASSO PAINTED BEFORE HE DIED SOON THEY TOO WILL BE NOTHING BUT JUNK.
THE STRUCTURE'S IN BAD SHAPE, BUT. THE FURNISHINGS DON'T LOOK LIKE JUNK AT ALL.
OF COURSE NOT THIS PAINTING HERE IS A MONET

SENSEI, WOULD YOU LIKE A DRINK? SORRY, IT'S CHEAP STUFF.
SURROUNDED BY SUCH VALUABLE WORKS OF ART?
WHY DO YOU LIVE IN SUCH A DREARY PLACE...
DAUGHTER, COME DRINK WITH US.
A GIFT FROM MY HUSBAND BACCHUS
BARBARA CAN HOLD HER LIQUOR, BUT YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING
HE DROPPED HIS PASSPORT, SO HE WENT TO GO LOOK FOR IT
WHERE'S RUSSIA?
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY... YOU SELL PEOPLE IMITATIONS AND TELL PEOPLE THEY'RE BY PICASSO OR MONET.
ANYTHING MADE AS A LUXURY IS NOT ART BUT PRODUCT
ART IS POVERTY
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH


WHY WORRY ABOUT HIM? ALL HE'S DONE IS GET YOU INTO TROUBLE, SENSEI
IT'S DANGEROUS OUT THERE!
BUT JUST TO BE SAFE, I HAVE TO CALL AND GET HIM PROTECTION
CRASH!!
WH-WHO...

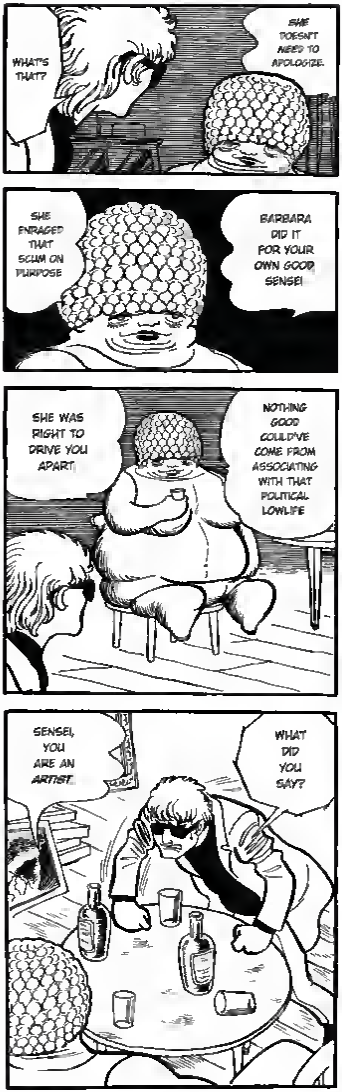
RU-RUSSALKA!
ARGH. WH-WHY DID YOU HIT ME? ARE YOU CRAZY?
YOU COWARDLY MAN...
WH-WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
IT'S NO WONDER THEY'VE BEEN ABLE TO FOLLOW ME EVERYWHERE... YOU'VE BEEN TELLING THEM EXACTLY WHERE TO GO!
YOU PRETENDED TO HELP ME ESCAPE SO YOU COULD SELL ME OUT TO MY ENEMIES, DIDN'T YOU!?
THAT. THAT'S RIDICULOUS! I'M NOT A PICKPOCKET!
YOU'RE TRYING TO TRAP ME!
YOU STOLE MY PASS-PORT.
THAT'S OUTRA-GEOUS!
RUSSALKA, COME TO YOUR SENSES!

GIVE ME MY PASSPORT!
BECAUSE YOU WERE A FAMOUS JAPANESE AUTHOR, I LET MY GUARD DOWN, I BECAME YOUR FRIEND... I WAS A FOOL.
I DON'T HAVE IT!
WAIT!
RUSS-ALKA!!
VROOM
DAMN IT!


WOAH!
VROOM
BASTARDS!

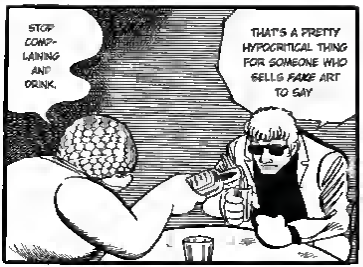
I'M IN AN ALLEY IN SHINJUKU, KABUKICHO THERE'S A TALL BLACK MAN BEING CHASED BY A CAR FULL OF THUGS... HIS LIFE IS IN DANGER!
YOU MUST FIND HIM AND PROTECT HIM! HURRY! WHAT? NO, I'M NOT INVOLVED
WHAT A MESS
HMPH
SENSEI, YOU LOOK DISAPPOINTED. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SCUM?
WELL, HAVE A DRINK
HE CALLED ME A COWARD AND SUDDENLY HIT ME
EVERY-ONE'S GONE MAD...

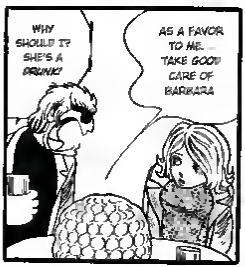
PEOPLE ARE OUT TO GET HIM. IT'S NO WONDER HE'S SO PARANOID
THIS? PASSPORT.
BARBARA- WHAT DO YOU HAVE THERE?
I SWIPED IT
WHERE DID YOU FIND IT? WHERE?
GRR. THIS IS THE PASSPORT RUSSALKA LOST!
SHOW ME!
SMACK
STOP THIS! SHE'S JUST A GIRL.


WHAT'S THAT?
SHE DOESN'T NEED TO APOLOGIZE.
SHE ENRAGED THAT SCUM ON PURPOSE
BARBARA DID IT FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, SENSEI
SHE WAS RIGHT TO DRIVE YOU APART.
NOTHING GOOD COULD'VE COME FROM ASSOCIATING WITH THAT POLITICAL LOWLIFE
SENSEI, YOU ARE AN ARTIST.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
WHAT WAS IT YOU SAID BEFORE - "HE LOST HIS PASSPORT AND WENT TO GO FIND IT?"
YOU WORTHLESS BRAT!
HOW COULD YOU BE SO BRAZEN WHEN YOU STOLE IT YOURSELF?
YOU GOT ME FALSELY ACCUSED AND DESTROYED MY FRIENDSHIP!
SORRY, WON'T CUT IT THIS TIME!

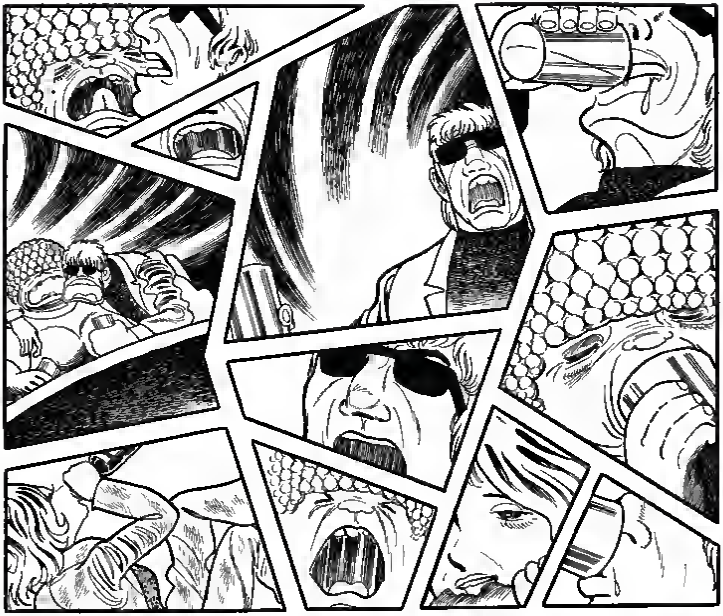
ARTISTS SHOULD DEDICATE THEIR SOULS TO ART ALONE.
GROW ADDICTED TO POLITICS OR MONEY, AND IT'S ALL OVER.
IF YOU HAD KEPT ASSOCIATING WITH THAT SCUM, YOU WOULD HAVE ENDED UP JUST LIKE HIM.

NOT EVEN DRINKING CAN MAKE UP FOR THE TERRIBLE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TODAY!

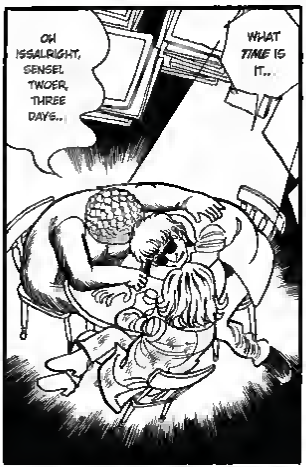

STOP COMPLAINING AND DRINK.
THAT'S A PRETTY HYPOCRITICAL THING FOR SOMEONE WHO SELLS *FAKE* ART TO SAY

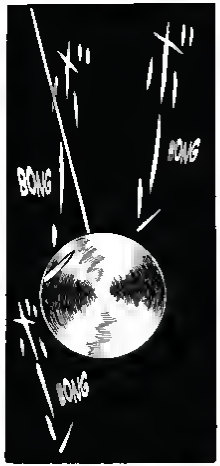

WHY SHOULD I? SHE'S A *DRUNK!*
AS A FAVOR TO ME... TAKE GOOD CARE OF BARKARA

FINE, WE'LL DRINK TO RUSSALKA'S BAD LUCK.



TO RETURN THA PASS-PORT!
WELL, I'M GOIN' HOME. HIC...
HIC...


OH ISSALRIGHT, SENSEI. TWOER, THREE DAYS...
WHAT TIME IS IT...


BONG
BONG
BONG

I DON'T WANT FAKES.
YOU CAN TAKE SOME PAINTINGS IF YOU LIKE.
SENSEI, ISSNOT MUCH, BUT...
BARBARA, TAKE HIM HOME.
BUT SINCE YOU OFFERED, I GUESS I'LL TAKE THIS PICASSO TO HANG UP IN MY BATHROOM! AHA.
IT'S ANEMOSYNE — G'BYE.
SORRY MUM, DID YOU MENTION YOUR NAME?
BLEEH—
URK-
YEAH RIGHT

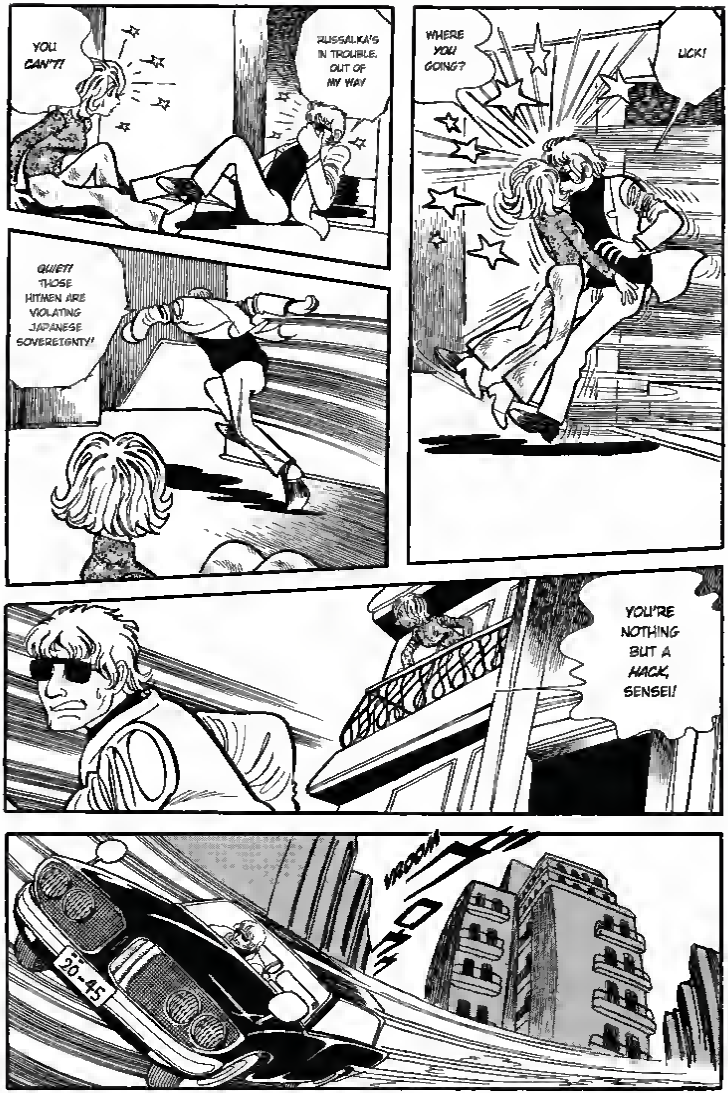
WHUMP
ドタ!!
HAVEN'T YOU DRUNK ENOUGH?
BARBARA, WATER.
EEK?
EEK? YEAH RIGHT.... I KNOW WASS GOIN' ON. .
D-DYOU LOVE ME? DO YOU?
GULP GULP

DON' STRUGGLE, MY DIRTY MUSE.
STOP! I HATE YOU!
BAUDELAIRE SAID "LOVE IS A PASSION FOR PROSTITUTION."
AACK! DON'T TREAT ME LIKE A WHORE!
BONK
OOF, OUCH, IT'S LIKE A HUNDRED NAILS HAVE BEEN DRIVEN INTO MY SKULL.
SNORE
SNORE

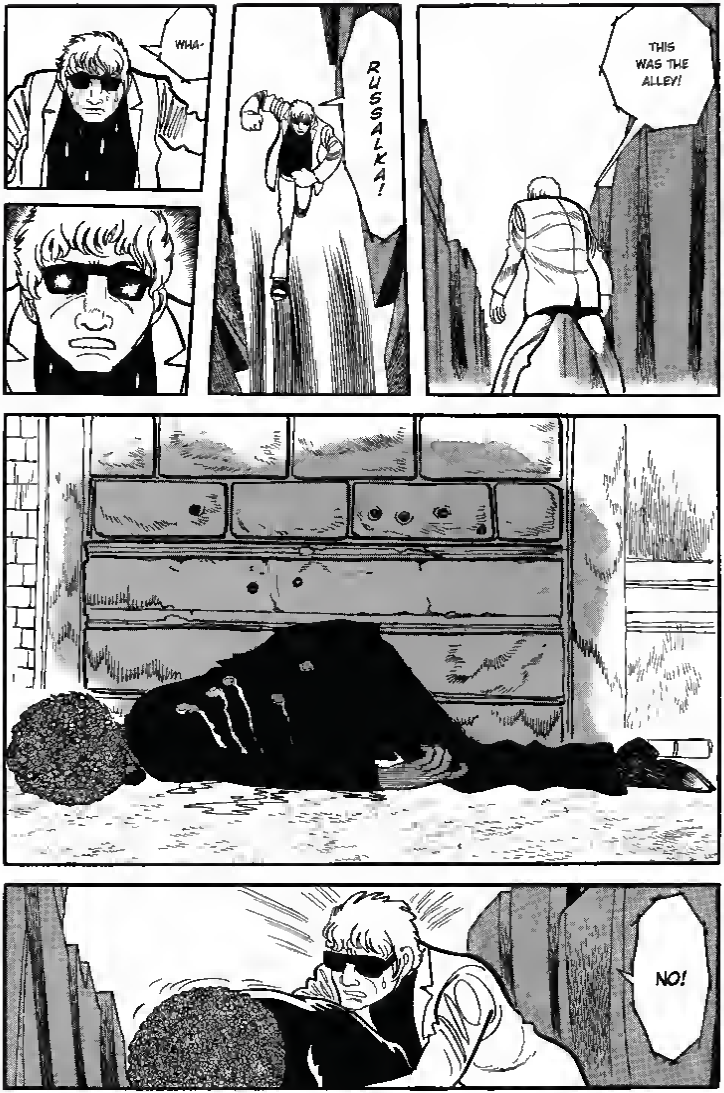
SWEAT OUT A HANGOVER, I ALWAYS SAY...
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?
LAST NIGHT...
THAT OLD BAT... MNEMOSYNE, WAS IT? AND HER STORE FULL OF JUNK.
MNEMOSYNE... MOTHER OF THE SEVEN MUSES AND THE GODDESS OF MEMORY... HM.
DOESN'T RING ANY BELLS...
MNEMO-SYNE, LET'S SEE...
FAKE? THIS?
WOW.. WHERE DID YOU FIND THIS?
HEYA
A FAKE? YOU'RE JOKING
THAT'S A FAKE PICASSO

ARE YOU DOUBTING MY EYE FOR ART?
I GOT IT FOR NOTHING! YOU'RE JUST SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR DISAPPOINTMENT.
HAHA !
TODAY IT'S WORTH MILLIONS!
THIS IS THE MISSING MASTERPIECE "PORTRAIT OF FATE AS A YOUNG WOMAN!" PICASSO PAINTED IT 20 YEARS AGO, BUT IT WAS LOST!
THEN LET ME GET IT APPRAISED CAN I TAKE IT WITH ME?
IF BARBARA WERE HERE SHE'D BACK ME UP. IT'S TRASH!
MONSIEUR, IT'S RUSSALKA. YOU MUST HELP ME!
HEAVEN'S SAKE
SLAM!
BE MY GUEST
WHAT ?
DAMN IT

I'M SORRY ABOUT LAST WEEK... I WASN'T IN MY RIGHT MIND!
RUSSALKA? WHERE ARE YOU?
LAST WEEK? WASN'T THAT YESTERDAY...?
NO, THEY HAVE ME TRAPPED. I'M IN SHINJUKU. PLEASE, MONSIEUR!
CAN'T YOU COME HERE?
THEY'LL KILL ME... AND I'VE GOT NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN!!
PLEASE HELP! THEY'VE GOT ME CORNERED. THEY'RE CLOSING IN ON ME RIGHT NOW!
RIGHT. KABUKICHO 5, NUMBER 12. THERE'S A LITTLE DRUG STORE THE ENTRANCE IS RIGHT NEXT DOOR.
SHINJUKU? TRY TO MAKE IT TO BARBARA'S MOTHER'S UNDERGROUND ANTIQUE SHOP. IT'S AT... HOLD ON.
I'LL MEET YOU THERE!


YOU CAN'T!!
RUSSALKA'S IN TROUBLE. OUT OF MY WAY!
WHERE YOU GOING?
LICK!
QUIET! THOSE HITMEN ARE VIOLATING JAPANESE SOVEREIGNTY!
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A HACK, SENSEI!
VROOM
90-45

VROOM
VR-
VR-
VRM
BEEP
BEEP
BEEEEP
SCREECH
20-45


WHA-
RUSSALKA!
THIS WAS THE ALLEY!
NO!

THERE'S NO DOOR!
I KNOW IT WAS HERE!
I-I-I WAS SURE IT WAS HERE. IT HAS TO BE
...
...
RUSSALKA, WAKE UP! I DIDN'T SEND YOU TO THE WRONG PLACE...
A RENOWNED AUTHOR ON A PRIVATE VISIT TO JAPAN, MR. RUSSALKA WAS A CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL FIGURE IN HIS NATIVE COUNTRY, AND THAT STATUS...
A FOREIGNER WAS KILLED TODAY AT AROUND 3 P.M. IN AN ALLEY IN SHINJUKU 3-CHOME. THE VICTIM'S NAME WAS SVANTA RUSSALKA.

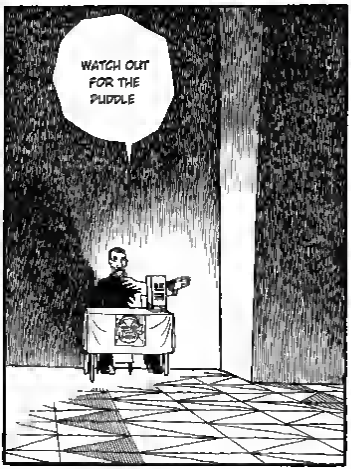
BRRRING
OH, IT'S YOU.
WHAT WAS THAT? BULL-SHIT!
THE PICASSO WAS REAL. I WAS DUMBFOUNDED. I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EARS. THEY CONVINCED ME TO DONATE IT TO AN ART MUSEUM IN UENO.
AND IF THAT PICASSO WAS REAL...
BUT I GOT IT FOR FREE AT A TINY SHOP IN SHINJUKU!
THEN MNEMOSYNE'S SHOP... WHAT WAS IT?

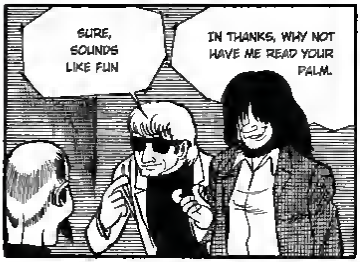
# Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER SEVEN:

## CHAIN THE WOLF DOWN

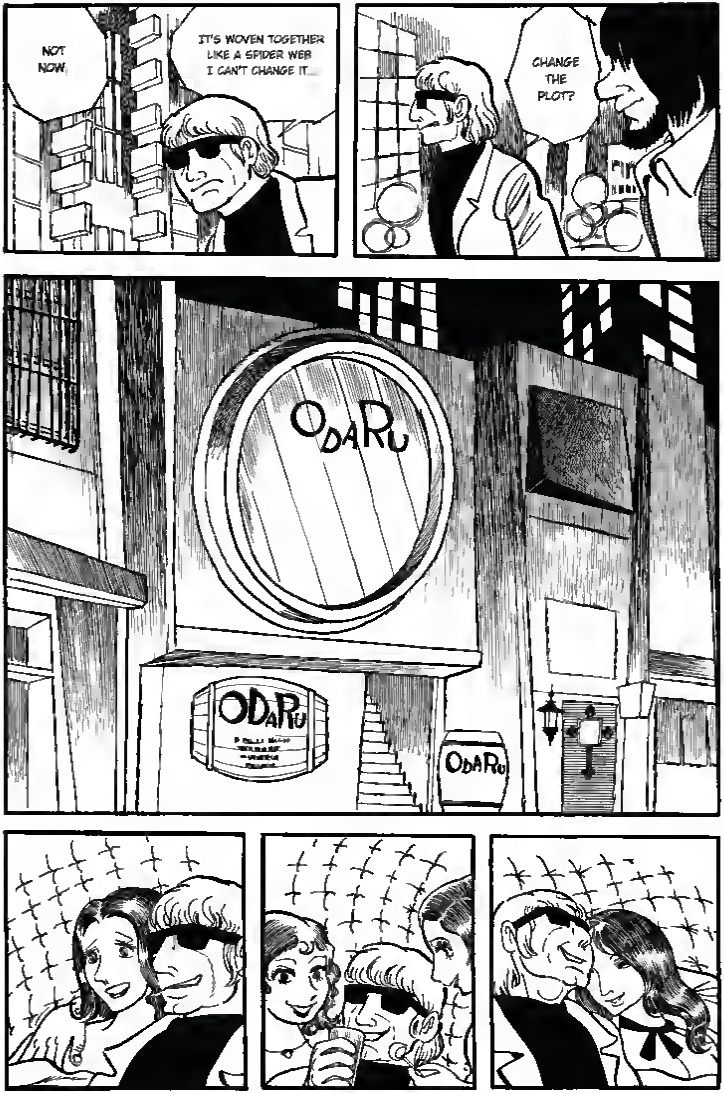
OH, THANKS


WATCH OUT FOR THE PUDDLE


SURE, SOUNDS LIKE FUN
IN THANKS, WHY NOT HAVE ME READ YOUR PALM.

PLEASE TELL ME YOUR BIRTH DATE. I NEED KNOW NOTHING ELSE.
I WAS BORN ON OCTOBER 5TH, 1940
VERY WELL. IF YOU WOULD TAKE A SEAT.
YOU ARE NOW ENGAGED IN A GREAT TASK.
IS MY FORTUNE GOOD?
HM...
AND THE MODEL FOR THAT NOVEL IS, A STRANGE WOMAN WHO IS LIVING WITH YOU!
YOU'RE SPOT-ON, ACTUALLY
A NOVEL, PERHAPS?
I HAVE BEEN WRITING A MAJOR WORK BASED ON HER.
BINGO I'M SURPRISED!
A YOUNG WOMAN!
YOU MUST NOT!
YES. I AM GOING TO KILL HIM OFF
ARE YOU PLANNING TO HAVE THE PROTAGONIST DIE... IN THE END?
AND BY ANY CHANCE

WELL THAT'D BE A PROBLEM... THE OUTLINE'S ALREADY FINISHED
YOU MUST NOT LET HIM DIE!
IN THIS NOVEL, YOU ARE WRITING YOUR OWN FUTURE
YOU MUST LET HIM LIVE!
IN OTHER WORDS THE CHARACTER'S FATE IS YOUR FATE!
THAT PROTAGONIST IS YOU YOURSELF
!
BUT IF YOU KILL THAT PROTAGONIST...
IF YOU DO, YOUR LUCK WILL BE GOOD... THE BOOK WILL BE A BESTSELLER, AND YOU WILL INSTANTLY WIN GLOBAL RENOWN
YOU WILL DIE!
WHAT THE HELL... HE TOOK MY MONEY AND THREATENED ME!

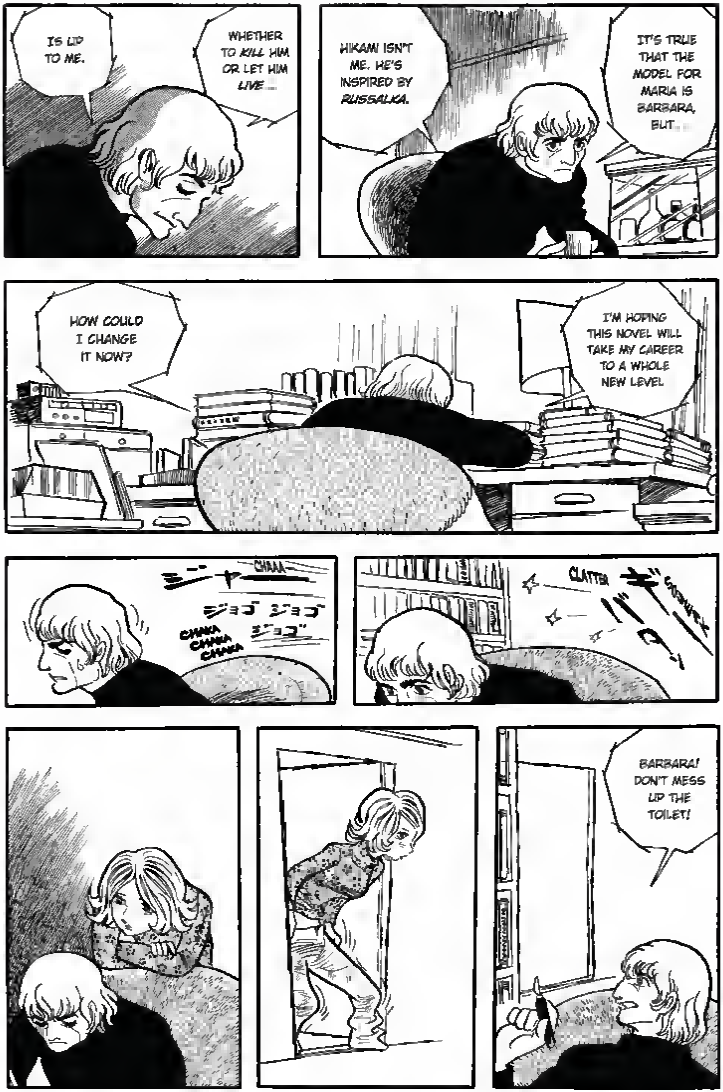

NOT NOW.
IT'S WOVEN TOGETHER LIKE A SPIDER WEB I CAN'T CHANGE IT...
CHANGE THE PLOT?
ODARU
ODARU
ODARU

GET OUT OF HERE!
LET ME GO
HEY! IS YÔSUKE MIKURA HERE? YÔSUKE MIKURA!
BAR... BAR... BARBARA'S HERE T'SEE HIM! I CAME ALL TH'S WAY JUST T'SEE HIM!
YOU MUST LET HIM LIVE! IF YOU DO, YOUR LUCK WILL BE GOOD... BUT IF YOU LET HIM DIE, THEN YOU TOO...
WILL DIE!

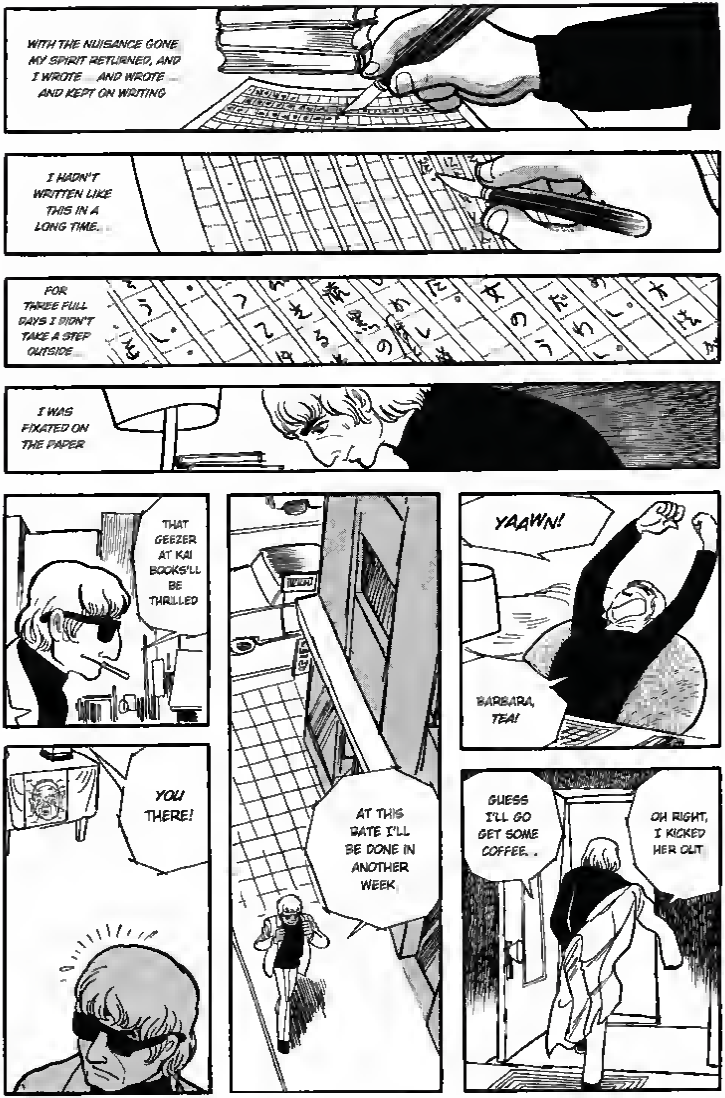
GET OUT OF HERE, YOU LITTLE HOODLUM!
DONCHA KNOW WHO I AM? I'M MUH-MUH-MIKURA'S WIFE!
SLAP
OH MY SENSEI...
GIMME 3,000 YEN.
FINE, YOU'RE ANGRY? DO WHAT YOU WANT! RAPE ME!
SENSEI... I'M SORRY...

SHOOK
SHOOKE
Chain the Wolf Down
Akira Hikami author 32 years old
"Maria Marijuana" is a female juvenile
delinquent who follows him around.
At her prodding he writes a novel.
He gains wealth and fame.
He marries the daughter of an MP.
The MP asks Hikami for backing.
Finally he announces his candidacy for MP.
He wins election. Enters politics.
Maria leaves him.
Hikami murders Maria.
He is killed by Maria's friends.
THE PROTAGONIST IS AKIRA HIKAMI, AN AUTHOR, ABOUT 32 YEARS OLD.
THE TITLE IS "CHAIN THE WOLF DOWN."

HE'S FORCED TO BECOME ONE OF ROKUMA'S SUPPORTERS, HE GETS INTO ROKUMA'S CABINET, AND USING ROKUMA'S INFLUENCE HIKAMI GETS ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT...
AT SOME POINT A DELINQUENT KNOWN BY THE NAME "MARIA MARIJUANA" COMES TO LIVE WITH HIM... AT HER PRODDING HIKAMI WRITES A NOVEL AND BECOMES FAMOUS AND WEALTHY... THEN MARRIES THE DAUGHTER OF A POLITICIAN NAMED ROKUMA.
REALIZING HOW HE LOVES MARIA, HIKAMI GOES AFTER HER...
MARIA MARIJUANA IS BITTERLY DISAPPOINTED AND LEAVES HIKAMI...
BUT SHE HAS ONLY CONTEMPT FOR HIM AND REFUSES TO SPEAK TO HIM...
AND IN REVENGE, MARIA'S GANG...
SHOOT
I GUESS THIS PART IS A LOT LIKE CARMEN...
FINALLY, HIKAMI MURDERS MARIA.
KILLS HIM.


IS UP TO ME.
WHETHER TO KILL HIM OR LET HIM LIVE...
HIKAMI ISN'T ME. HE'S INSPIRED BY RUSSALKA.
IT'S TRUE THAT THE MODEL FOR MARIA IS BARBARA, BUT...
HOW COULD I CHANGE IT NOW?
I'M HOPING THIS NOVEL WILL TAKE MY CAREER TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL
CHAA
CHAA CHAA CHAA
CLATTER
BARBARA! DON'T MESS UP THE TOILET!

I READ THAT, Y'KNOW.
THAT PROTAGONIST'S PRETTY SERIOUS... YOU SHOULDA GIVEN HIM A LIBIDO
BUT ONE THING DOES BOTHER ME...
I KNOW I SHOULDN'T COMMENT, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE TAKEN A STEP AWAY FROM YOUR SIMPLE AESTHETICS TOWARD A NEW PHILOSOPHY.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S USING ME AS A MODEL AND LEAVING SO MUCH STUFF OUT!
YOU KNOW, NORMALLY I'D CHARGE A FEE!
STOP PLAYING CRITIC AND GO HOME!
IF YOU MAKE HIM A PERVERT, IT'S CREEPIER...
WHEN HE KILLS THE GIRL.
FINE! I'VE GOT NO ATTACHMENT TO THIS PLACE!
GET OUT AND DON'T COME BACK!
A FEE? THAT'S A LAUGH! DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH MY REPUTATION'S SUFFERED BECAUSE OF YOU?

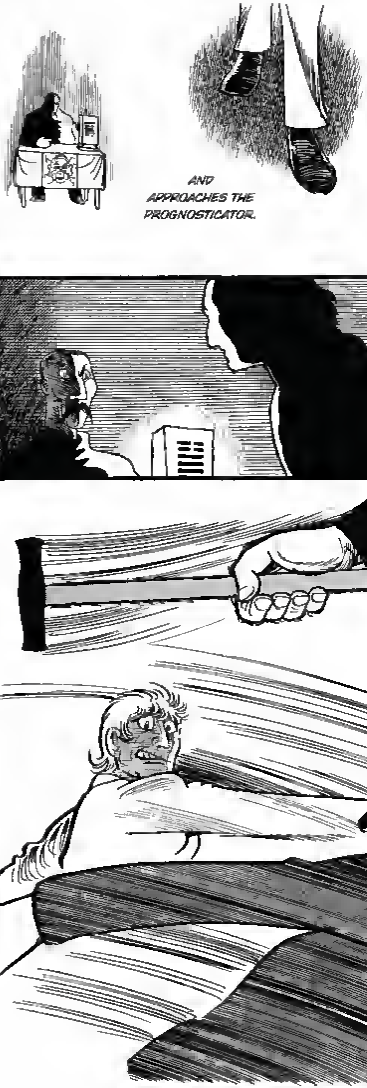

WITH THE NUISANCE GONE, MY SPIRIT RETURNED, AND I WROTE... AND WROTE... AND KEPT ON WRITING
I HADN'T WRITTEN LIKE THIS IN A LONG TIME...
FOR THREE FULL DAYS I DIDN'T TAKE A STEP OUTSIDE...
I WAS FIXATED ON THE PAPER
THAT GEEZER AT KAI BOOKS'LL BE THRILLED
YOU THERE!
AT THIS RATE I'LL BE DONE IN ANOTHER WEEK
YAAWN!
BARBARA, TEA!
GUESS I'LL GO GET SOME COFFEE..
OH RIGHT, I KICKED HER OUT

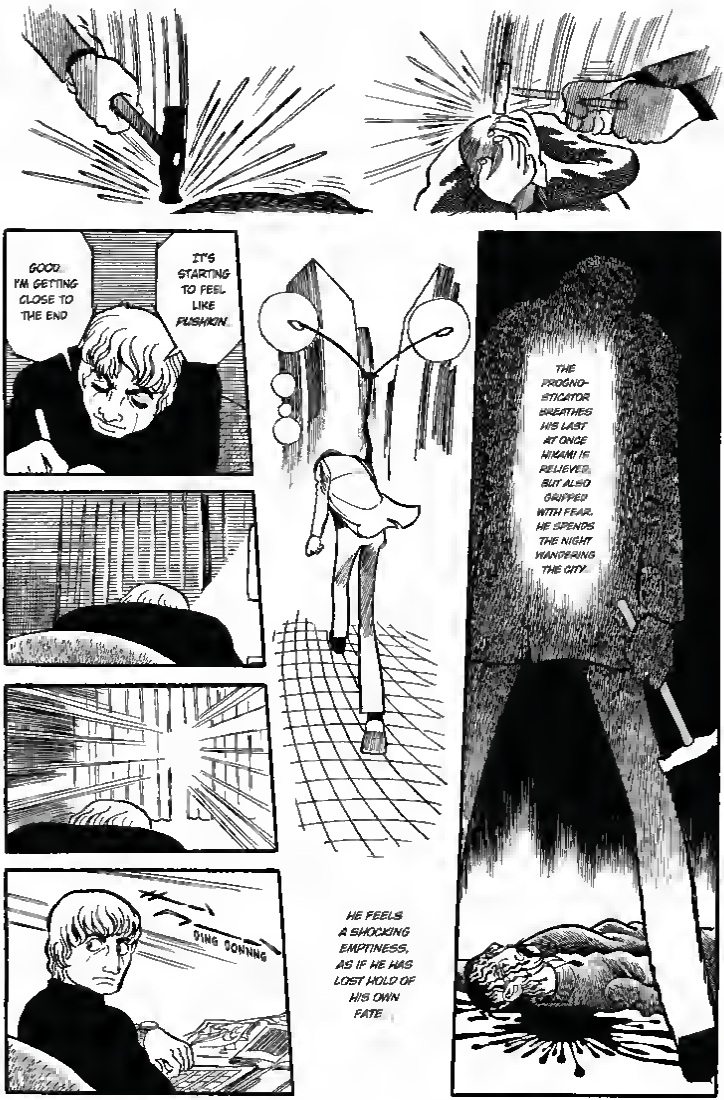
YOU WANT TO SEE IF HE LIVES OR DIES? THEN BUY THE BOOK AND FIND OUT!
IF YOU DO NOT THEN EVERY PASSING MOMENT BRINGS DEATH CLOSER!
YOU MUST! CHANGE THE STORY IMMEDIATELY!
YOU CANNOT ESCAPE!
YOU'VE MADE PROGRESS ON YOUR BOOK, BUT YOU STILL WON'T LET YOUR PROTAGONIST LIVE.
WE CAN FORESEE THE COURSE OUR LIVES WILL TAKE. AND THESE PREMONITIONS ARE USUALLY CORRECT
ON OCCASION, A MAN CAN CATCH A GLIMPSE OF HIS OWN FUTURE
LISTEN TO ME.
SPARE ME THE SUPERNATURAL FAIRY STORIES!
IT IS LIKELY YOU HAVE SENSED YOUR FUTURE AND ARE UNWITTINGLY WRITING ABOUT IT.

LET HIM LIVE...
FOR YOUR OWN SAKE
I WARN YOU, DON'T KILL YOUR PROTAGONIST!
IT SHOWS IN YOUR FORTUNE!
IF I HEARD THAT CRAP EVERY DAY, I'D HAVE TO GIVE UP WRITING!
THIS HAS TO STOP...
I WARN YOU, DON'T KILL YOUR PROTAGONIST!
DAMN IT!

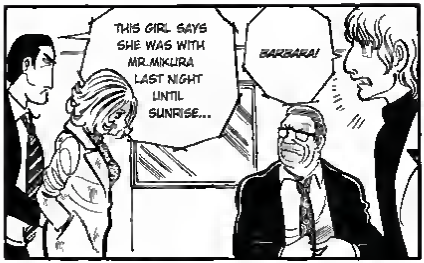
YOU STILL WILL NOT LET HIM LIVE! WHY DO YOU REFUSE TO HEED MY WARNING?
I'M SORRY TO KEEP BRINGING THIS UP... BUT WHEN THIS IS DONE, COULD YOU GIVE KANAKO AN ANSWER?
KANAKO HAS DECISIONS TO MAKE, TOO...
IT ALL DEPENDS ON HOW YOU FEEL, SENSEI...
SURE... BUT RIGHT NOW I HAVE TO FOCUS ON FINISHING THIS
JUST TWO CHAPTERS LEFT
IT'S A MASTERPIECE, SENSEI! THIS WILL BE A HUGE HIT!
IT'S COMPLETELY UNPRECEDENTED! YOUR FANS WILL BE STUNNED!
BY THE WAY...
NO ONE... A FORTUNE TELLER.
WH-WHO WAS THAT MAN?
NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS!
DEATH HANGS OVER YOU!
DON'T LET ME SEE YOUR FACE AGAIN!

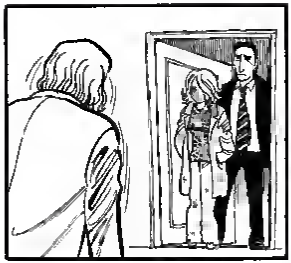
I ASSURE YOU. . IF YOU KILL YOUR PROTAGONIST YOU TOO WILL DIE!
BRRRING
DAY AND NIGHT, HIKAMI BECOMES OBSESSED WITH THE PROPHECY...
THAT'LL BUILD SUSPENSE.
ONE DAY HIKAMI MEETS AN ANNOYING PROGNOSTICATOR. WHO FORTELLS HIKAMI'S DEATH...
I'D LIKE TO KILL HIM!
...
...
THERE IS NO OTHER WAY
AND DECIDES TO KILL HIM.
FINALLY HIKAMI GROWS TERRIFIED OF THE MAN...

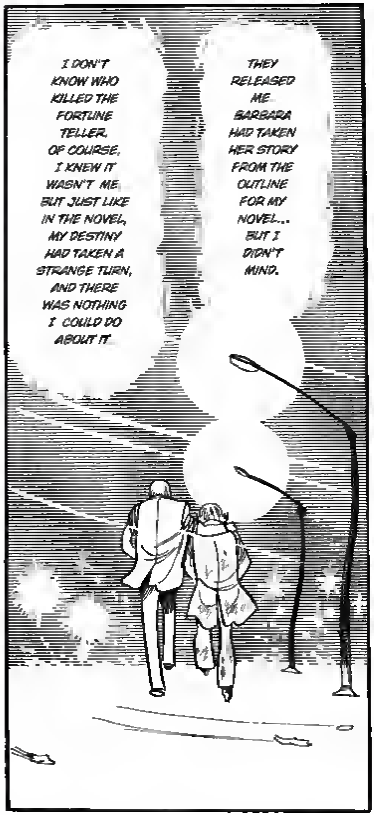

AND APPROACHES THE PROGNOSTICATOR.
SO ONE NIGHT, HIKAMI CONCEALS A HAMMER IN HIS COAT...
AND WITHOUT WARNING...

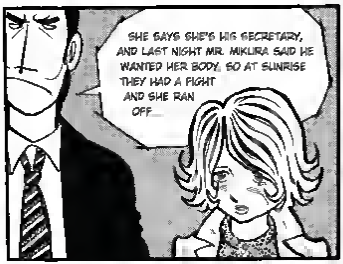

GOOD. I'M GETTING CLOSE TO THE END
IT'S STARTING TO FEEL LIKE PUSHKIN.
THE PROGNOSTICATOR BREATHES HIS LAST AT ONCE MIKAMI IS RELIEVED, BUT ALSO GRIPPED WITH FEAR. HE SPENDS THE NIGHT WANDERING THE CITY.
DING GONNNG
HE FEELS A SHOCKING EMPTINESS, AS IF HE HAS LOST HOLD OF HIS OWN FATE.

A FORTUNE TELLER WAS KILLED LAST NIGHT OUT ON THE MAIN ROAD.
WHAT?!
WE'RE POLICE DETECTIVES.
HE LOOKED VERY MUCH LIKE YOU, SENSEI.
AND ACCORDING TO THAT WITNESS...
HE WAS BEATEN TO DEATH WITH A BLUNT OBJECT. SOMEONE SAW THE SUSPECT...
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY BUT WOULD YOU MIND COMING WITH US FOR A WHILE? I'M SURE THIS WILL BE CLEARED UP IN NO TIME
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? I WAS HERE WRITING ALL NIGHT!
I'M SORRY I HAVE TO ASK, BUT... DID YOU GO OUT LAST NIGHT?
IF THEY HAD I'M SURE IT WOULD'VE CHANGED THEIR INVESTIGATION CONSIDERABLY...
I WAS LUCKY THE DETECTIVES DIDN'T READ THE MANUSCRIPT ON MY DESK.
THIS IS A MISTAKE... I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING!


THIS GIRL SAYS SHE WAS WITH MR. MIKURA LAST NIGHT UNTIL SUNRISE...
BARBARA!




I DON'T KNOW WHO KILLED THE FORTUNE TELLER. OF COURSE, I KNEW IT WASN'T ME. BUT JUST LIKE IN THE NOVEL, MY DESTINY HAD TAKEN A STRANGE TURN, AND THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO ABOUT IT.
THEY RELEASED ME. BARBARA HAD TAKEN HER STORY FROM THE OUTLINE FOR MY NOVEL... BUT I DIDN'T MIND.

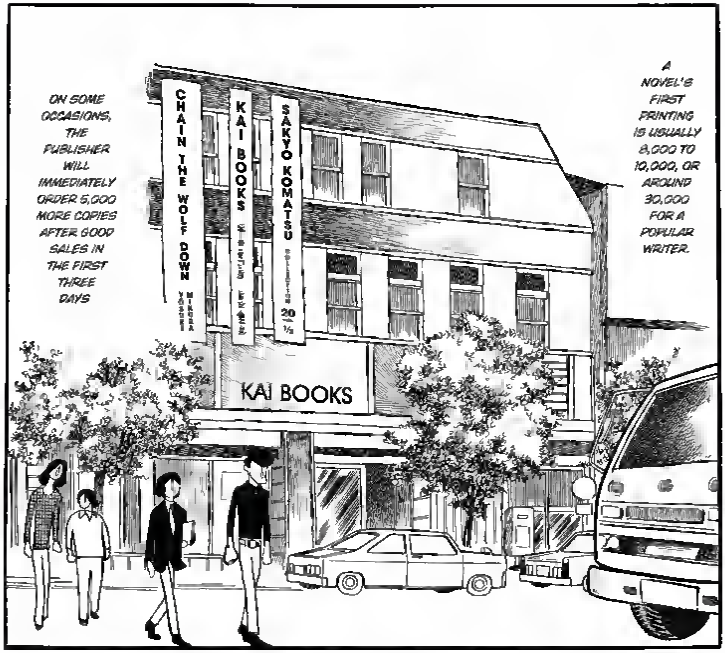

SHE SAYS SHE'S HIS SECRETARY, AND LAST NIGHT MR. MIKURA SAID HE WANTED HER BODY. SO AT SUNRISE THEY HAD A FIGHT AND SHE RAN OFF...

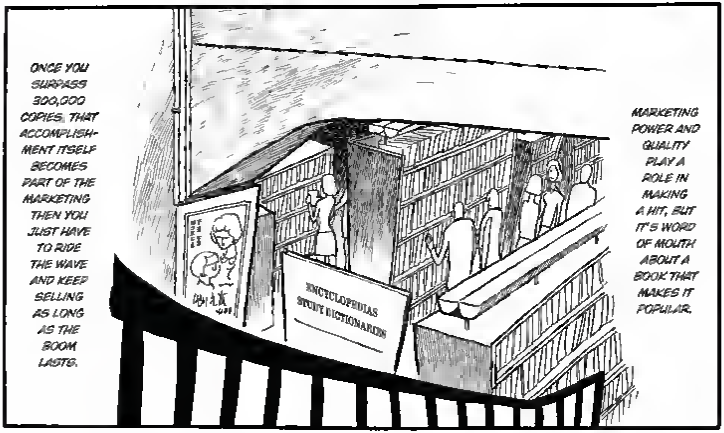
SENSE! FORCED ME TO SLEEP WITH HIM, SO WE ARGUED AND I LEFT. BY THEN IT WAS MORNING...

MR. MIKURA. IS SHE TELLING THE TRUTH?
YES. .

# Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER EIGHT:
## THE REPLICA


ON SOME OCCASIONS, THE PUBLISHER WILL IMMEDIATELY ORDER 5,000 MORE COPIES AFTER GOOD SALES IN THE FIRST THREE DAYS
CHAIN THE WOLF DOWN
KAI BOOKS
SAKYO KOMATSU
KAI BOOKS
A NOVEL'S FIRST PRINTING IS USUALLY 8,000 TO 10,000, OR AROUND 30,000 FOR A POPULAR WRITER.

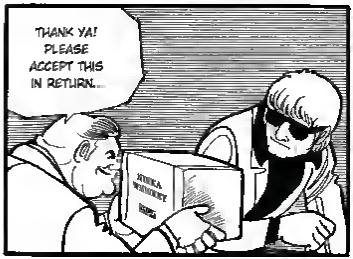

ONCE YOU SURPASS 300,000 COPIES, THAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ITSELF BECOMES PART OF THE MARKETING. THEN YOU JUST HAVE TO RIDE THE WAVE AND KEEP SELLING AS LONG AS THE BOOM LASTS.
ENCYCLOPEDIAS
STUDY DICTIONARIES
MARKETING POWER AND QUALITY PLAY A ROLE IN MAKING A HIT, BUT IT'S WORD OF MOUTH ABOUT A BOOK THAT MAKES IT POPULAR.

ONE RECENT EXAMPLE OF THIS WAS "JAPAN SINKS"
HELLO... OH, YES MR. KAI, HOW ARE YOU...
WELL, I WAS ASLEEP UNTIL 11..
RING
THE BOOM BEGINS SUDDENLY
BARBARA COULD AT LEAST ANSWER THE PHONE. HMPH...
YES. I HAVEN'T HEARD YET... IS THAT RIGHT? EVEN AT THE GINZA STORE? YES, I SEE. WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.. THAT MANY?

YOUR NEW BOOK'S SELLING LIKE GANGBUSTERS! WE HAD THIRTY, BUT THEY'RE ALL GONE NOW. I JUST ORDERED MORE!

WELL, IF IT ISN'T MR. MIKURA!
BOOK STORE
FU JI

MR. MIKURA! "CHAIN THE WOLF DOWN" IS SELLIN' REAL WELL!

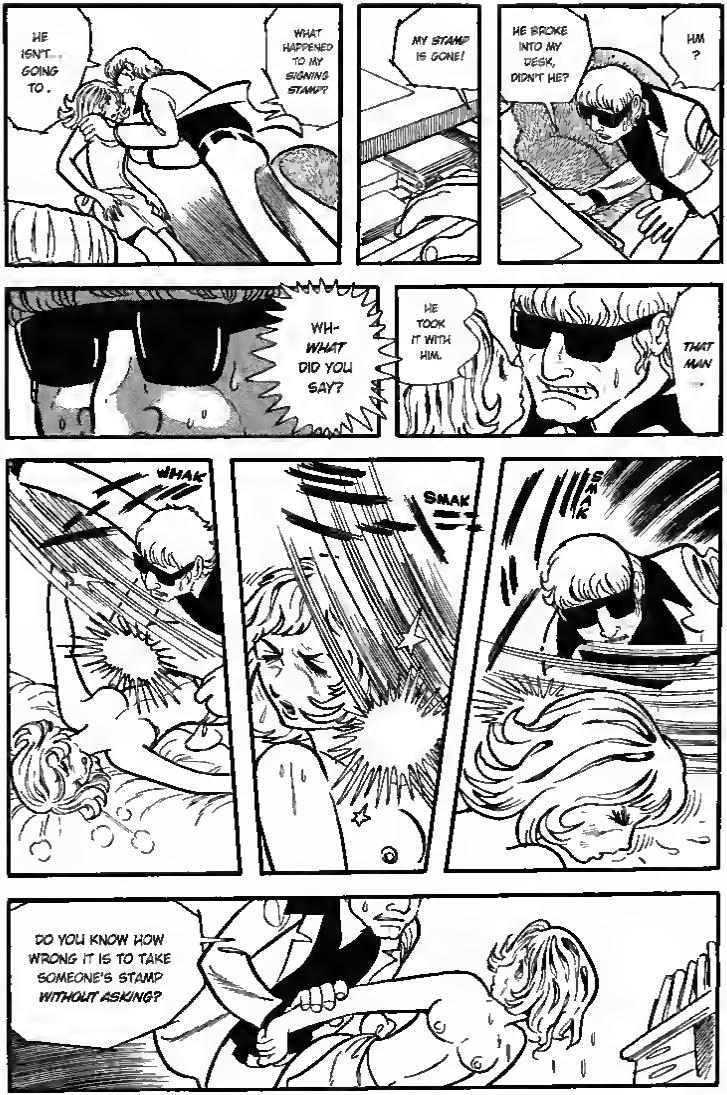

THANK YA! PLEASE ACCEPT THIS IN RETURN...

WOULD YA MIND SIGNIN' A FEW?
THEY'RE FOR MY REGULARS

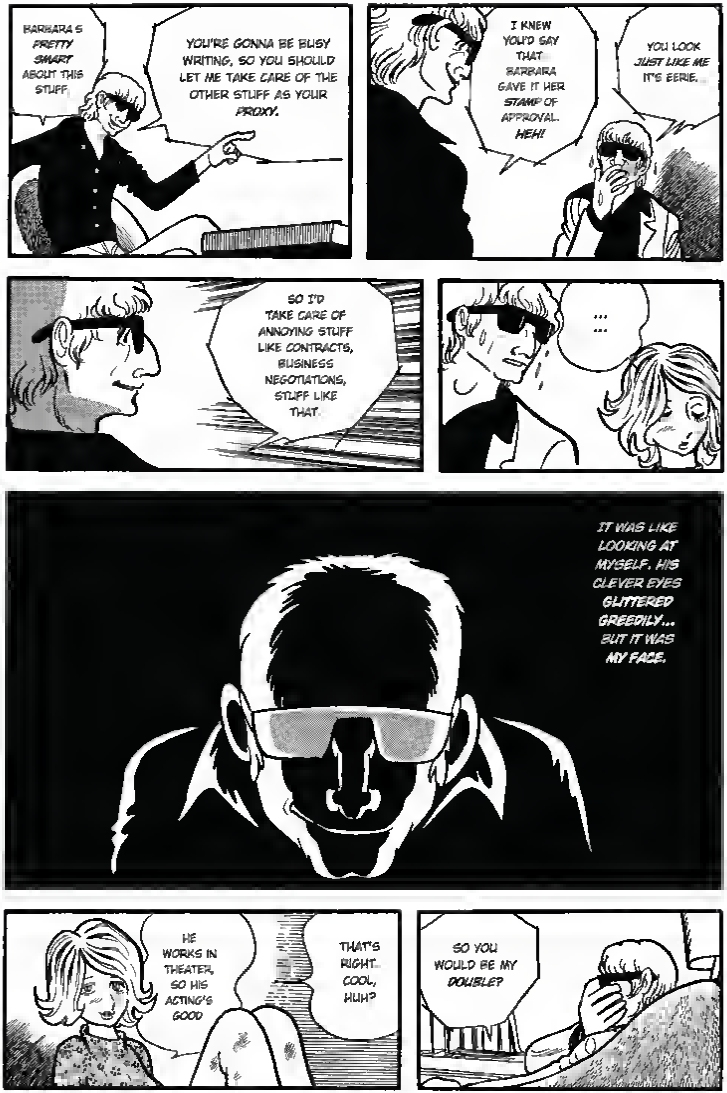
HE SURE IS PUSHY
HE STARTS EVERY OTHER SENTENCE WITH "MY DAUGHTER."
HELLO, MR. PRESIDENT? IT *DOES* SEEM TO BE SELLING WELL. THANK YOU!
SENSEI, WOULD YOU MIND DROPPING BY? I WAS HOPING TO TALK ABOUT MY DAUGHTER.
WHAT KINDA GREETING IS *THAT?* I'M A GUEST, AFTER ALL.
THIS IS *MY* HOUSE! ARE YOU A WANNABE WRITER FROM THE STICKS OR JUST A *BURGLAR?*
WHO THE HELL ARE *YOU?!*

BAR-BARA!
OH, YOU'RE BACK... HEH HEH HEH...
WHAT ?
HEY, BAR-BARA!
I WANT THIS BARBARIAN OUT OF MY HOUSE RIGHT NOW UNDERSTAND?
SO YOU BROUGHT THIS BUM OVER?
WHAT ?
AW, DON'T SAY THAT. HE'S GOOD WITH AN ABACUS.
HEH HEH HEH, YEAH. HE'S AN OLD FRIEND
AND TAXES TOO
YOUR NOVEL'S SELLING GREAT, RIGHT? YOU'RE GONNA GET HUGE ROYALTIES RIGHT?

SO WHAT ?
I'M SURE THEY WILL
THEN THEY'LL WANT TO MAKE A MOVIE.
PLUS THEY'LL WANT TO TRANSLATE IT INTO ENGLISH AND PUBLISH IT OVERSEAS
GET OUT... BEFORE THE BRIDGE OF YOUR NOSE BREAKS ITSELF ON MY FIST!
I'M A GOOD MANAGER. YOU MIGHT EVEN CALL ME A MANAGENIUS!
SO MAKE HIM YOUR MANAGER! YOU CAN'T KEEP UP WITH THAT STUFF ALL BY YOURSELF
HEY, WHATEVER YOU SAY! DIDN'T COME HERE LOOKING FOR A FIGHT...
HE'D BE USEFUL. YOU'RE A TERRIBLE JUDGE OF CHARACTER, YOU KNOW THAT?
I'M GOOD ENOUGH!
I'M IRRITATED ENOUGH WITH YOU AROUND. I DON'T NEED ANY OTHER GENIUSES AROUND

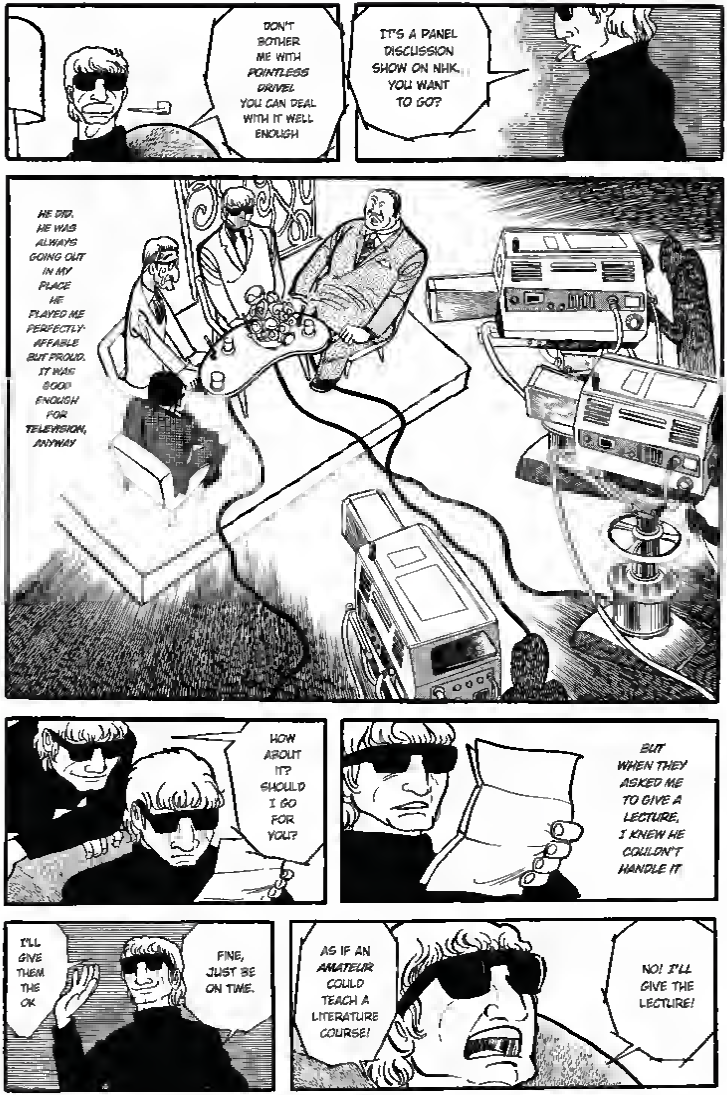

HE ISN'T... GOING TO.
WHAT HAPPENED TO MY SIGNING STAMP?
MY STAMP IS GONE!
HE BROKE INTO MY DESK, DIDN'T HE?
HM ?
WH- WHAT DID YOU SAY?
HE TOOK IT WITH HIM.
THAT MAN...
WHAK
SMAK
SMAK
DO YOU KNOW HOW WRONG IT IS TO TAKE SOMEONE'S STAMP WITHOUT ASKING?

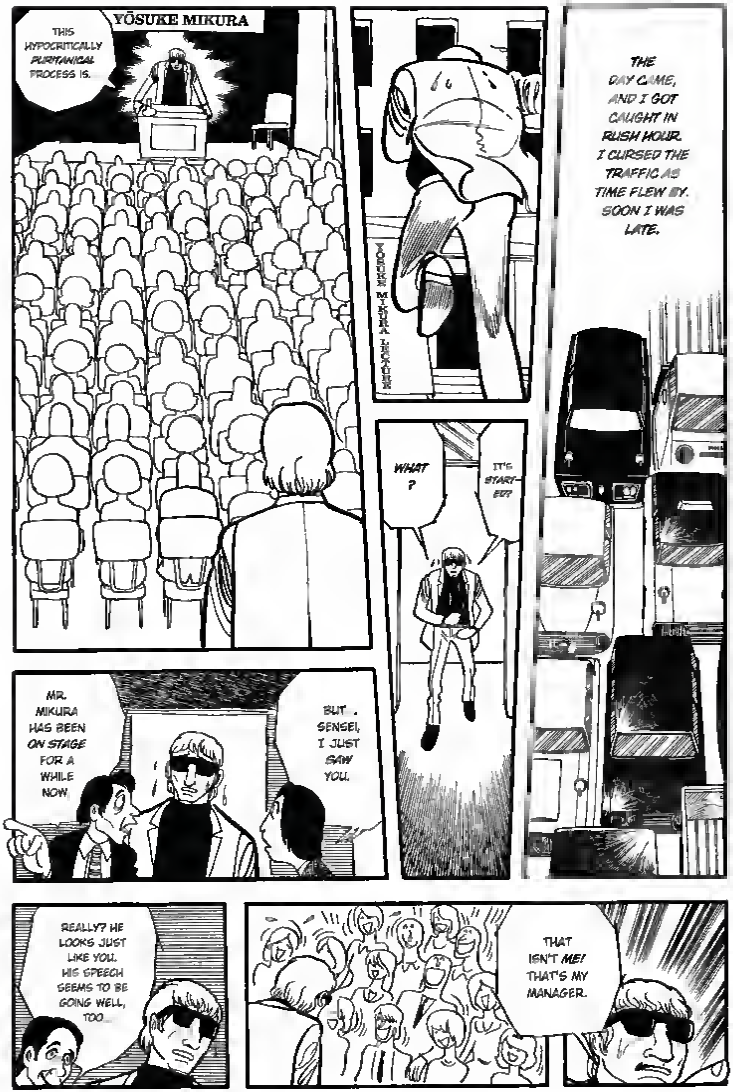
YOU'RE TOTALLY USELESS!
YOU GAVE IT TO HIM, DIDN'T YOU?
THEN IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO GET IT BACK!
IF HE USES IT WITHOUT CONSENT THAT'S A CRIMINAL ACT!
I CAME TO GIVE BACK YOUR STAMP.
I SHAVED.
HEH HEH HEH...


BARBARA'S PRETTY SMART ABOUT THIS STUFF.
YOU'RE GONNA BE BUSY WRITING, SO YOU SHOULD LET ME TAKE CARE OF THE OTHER STUFF AS YOUR PROXY.
I KNEW YOU'D SAY THAT. BARBARA GAVE IT HER STAMP OF APPROVAL. HEH!
YOU LOOK JUST LIKE ME. IT'S EERIE.
SO I'D TAKE CARE OF ANNOYING STUFF LIKE CONTRACTS, BUSINESS NEGOTIATIONS, STUFF LIKE THAT.
...
...
IT WAS LIKE LOOKING AT MYSELF. HIS CLEVER EYES GLITTERED GREEDILY... BUT IT WAS MY FACE.
HE WORKS IN THEATER, SO HIS ACTING'S GOOD.
THAT'S RIGHT. COOL, HUH?
SO YOU WOULD BE MY DOUBLE?

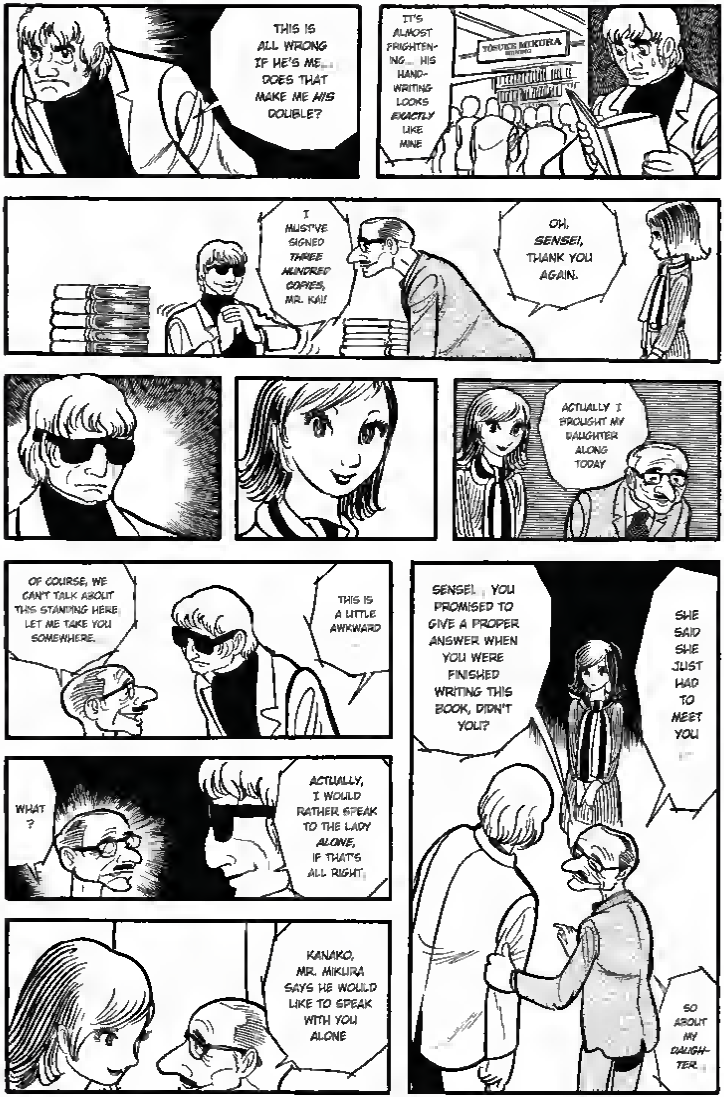
HERE'S YOUR STAMP
FOR THE TV RIGHTS
CON-TRACT ?
IN FACT I'VE ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF ONE CONTRACT FOR YOU
IT GIVES TBC PERMISSION TO MAKE THE BOOK INTO A DRAMA.
FINE, WHAT-EVER.
ALL RIGHT THEN.
YOU WON'T REGRET THIS!
ONE WEEK PASSED, THEN TWO. MY BOOK "CHAIN THE WOLF DOWN" SOARED UP THE BEST SELLER LIST.
CHAIN THE WOLF
IT WAS REPRINTED... THEN REPRINTED AGAIN
THE CONTRACT UPDATES WERE ALL HANDLED BY HIM.
OVERNIGHT, KAI BOOKS BECAME A TOP-TIER PUBLISHER.
KAI BOOKS
IT SOLD FIERCELY, BREAKING A MILLION COPIES IN NO TIME

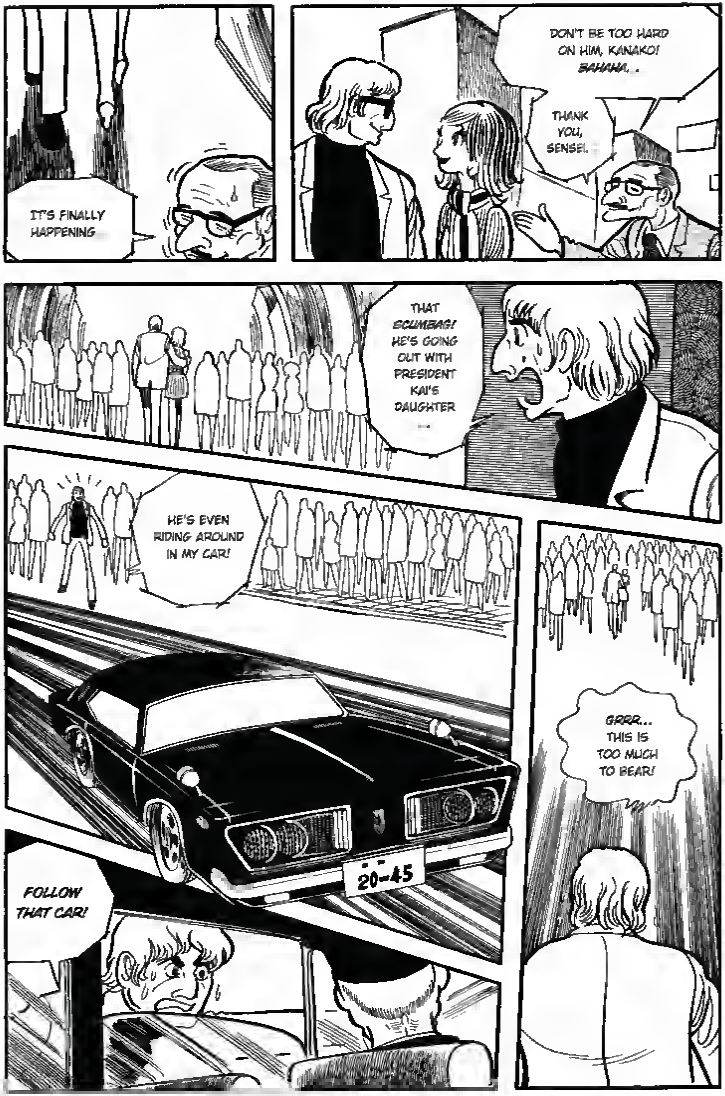
NIPPO STUDIOS CAME TO BUY THE MOVIE RIGHTS, COUNTING ON A NEW YEAR'S PREMIERE THE FOLLOWING YEAR.
TO HARNESS THE BOOM, TBC RUSHED OUT THE TV DRAMA
TBC
SCRIPT
TBC
TBC
TBC
ALL I HAD TO DO WAS WRITE AND WAIT. IN THAT SENSE HE WAS CONVENIENT.
ORDERS CAME IN FROM EVERYWHERE FOR MANUSCRIPTS, BUT HE HANDLED THEM ALL ADROITLY. HE DECLINED POLITELY AND SHREWDLY, THEN HELD OUT FOR BETTER TERMS.
YOU GO FOR ME!
THEY WANT YOU TO BE IN A COMMERCIAL.
YOU WERE SO STYLISH AND HANDSOME!
SENSEI, I SAW YOU IN THE COMMERCIAL!
THAT WASN'T ME
YÓSUKE HIKURA. A SILVER BLEND FOR A MAN WHO KNOWS THE DIFFERENCE!


DON'T BOTHER ME WITH POINTLESS DRIVEL YOU CAN DEAL WITH IT WELL ENOUGH
IT'S A PANEL DISCUSSION SHOW ON NHK. YOU WANT TO GO?
HE DID. HE WAS ALWAYS GOING OUT IN MY PLACE HE PLAYED ME PERFECTLY- AFFABLE BUT PROUD. IT WAS GOOD ENOUGH FOR TELEVISION, ANYWAY
HOW ABOUT IT? SHOULD I GO FOR YOU?
BUT WHEN THEY ASKED ME TO GIVE A LECTURE, I KNEW HE COULDN'T HANDLE IT
I'LL GIVE THEM THE OK
FINE, JUST BE ON TIME.
AS IF AN AMATEUR COULD TEACH A LITERATURE COURSE!
NO! I'LL GIVE THE LECTURE!

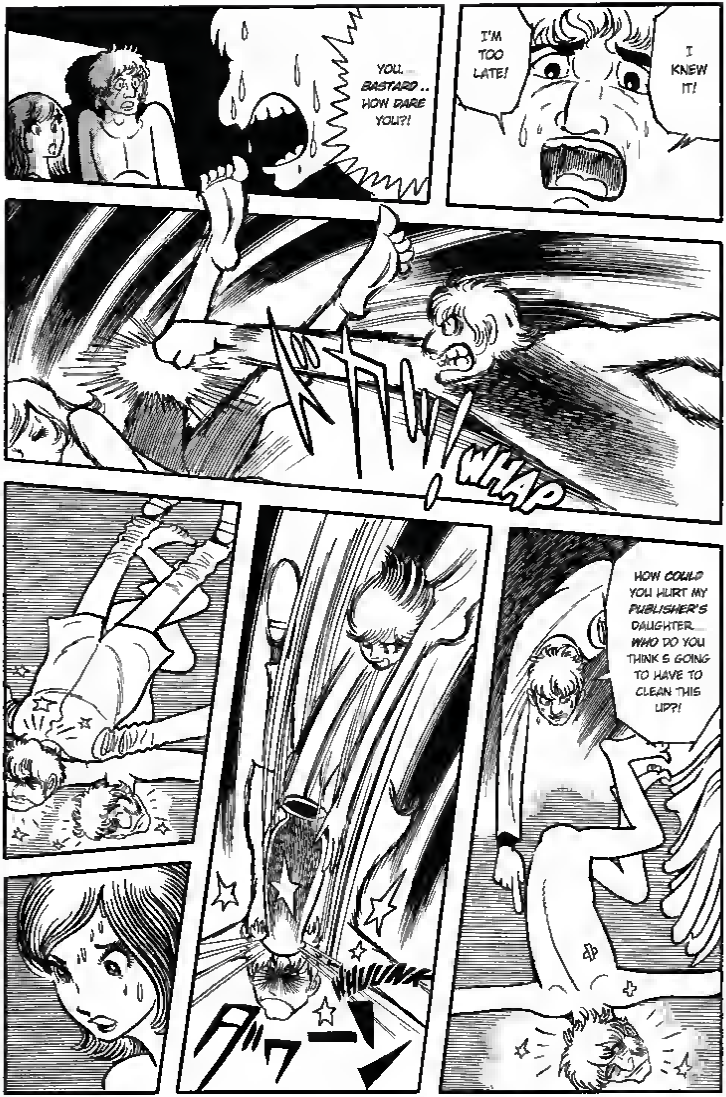

YŌSUKE MIKURA
THIS HYPOCRITICALLY PURITANICAL PROCESS IS.
YŌSUKE MIYAMA JUNCTION
THE DAY CAME, AND I GOT CAUGHT IN RUSH HOUR. I CURSED THE TRAFFIC AS TIME FLEW BY. SOON I WAS LATE.
WHAT ?
IT'S START-ED!!
MR. MIKURA HAS BEEN ON STAGE FOR A WHILE NOW.
BUT . SENSEI, I JUST SAW YOU.
REALLY? HE LOOKS JUST LIKE YOU. HIS SPEECH SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL, TOO...
THAT ISN'T ME! THAT'S MY MANAGER.

HE WAS RIGHT...
HE EXPLAINED THE BASICS WITH FLUENCY AND PANACHE...
BETTER THAN I COULD HAVE
I GAVE UP, SAT IN THE BACK ROW AND LISTENED TO THE END...
HI THERE
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
NO NEED TO THANK ME! A BILLION PEOPLE WERE WAITING, STARING AT AN EMPTY STAGE.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE...
WAIT WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
IT WAS RUSH HOUR.
GOT A SIGNING AT KINOKUNI BOOKS


THIS IS ALL WRONG IF HE'S ME... DOES THAT MAKE ME HIS DOUBLE?
IT'S ALMOST FRIGHTENING... HIS HANDWRITING LOOKS EXACTLY LIKE MINE
TOSUKE MIKURA
I MUST'VE SIGNED THREE HUNDRED COPIES, MR. KAI!
OH, SENSEI, THANK YOU AGAIN.
ACTUALLY I BROUGHT MY DAUGHTER ALONG TODAY
OF COURSE, WE CAN'T TALK ABOUT THIS STANDING HERE. LET ME TAKE YOU SOMEWHERE.
THIS IS A LITTLE AWKWARD...
WHAT?
ACTUALLY, I WOULD RATHER SPEAK TO THE LADY ALONE, IF THAT'S ALL RIGHT.
KANAKO, MR. MIKURA SAYS HE WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK WITH YOU ALONE
SENSEI, YOU PROMISED TO GIVE A PROPER ANSWER WHEN YOU WERE FINISHED WRITING THIS BOOK, DIDN'T YOU?
SHE SAID SHE JUST HAD TO MEET YOU...
SO ABOUT MY DAUGHTER...


IT'S FINALLY HAPPENING
DON'T BE TOO HARD ON HIM, KANAKO! BAHAHA...
THANK YOU, SENSEI.
THAT SCUMBAG! HE'S GOING OUT WITH PRESIDENT KAI'S DAUGHTER ...
HE'S EVEN RIDING AROUND IN MY CAR!
20-45
FOLLOW THAT CAR!
GRRR... THIS IS TOO MUCH TO BEAR!

?
HIS SINS WILL BE ON MY HEAD!
IF I'M TOO LATE TO PREVENT THE WORST...
HOTEL LONDON
112
SLAM

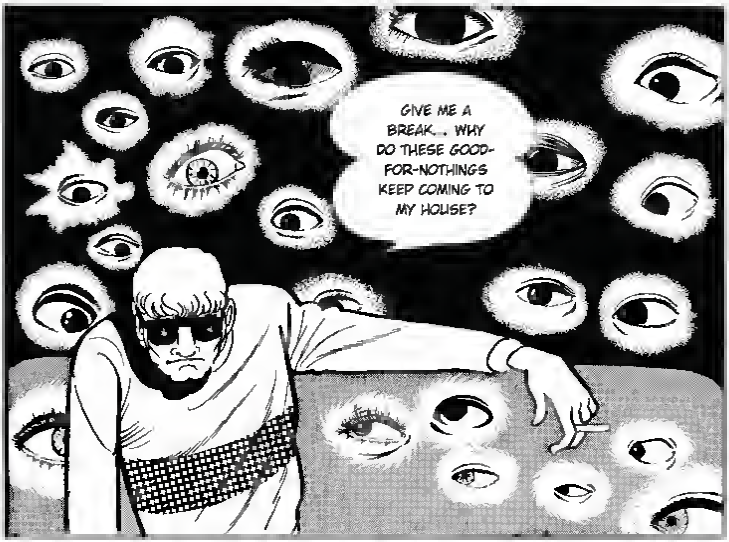

I KNEW IT!
I'M TOO LATE!
YOU, BASTARD.. HOW DARE YOU!?
WHAP
HOW COULD YOU HURT MY PUBLISHER'S DAUGHTER... WHO DO YOU THINK'S GOING TO HAVE TO CLEAN THIS UP?!
WHUUNK

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?
SO MY DAUGHTER WENT TO A HOTEL WITH THIS MAN, NOT THE REAL MIKURA?
PAPA, I'M GOING TO MARRY THIS MAN.
HE TOLD ME EVERYTHING ON THE WAY HERE. HE'S AN HONEST MAN. THAT'S WHY I LOVE HIM!
I KNOW THAT
KANAKO, THIS MAN ISN'T MIKURA-SENSEI!
I STOPPED GETTING PUSHY CALLS FROM KAI AFTER THAT. AS IT TURNS OUT, THAT MAN WAS A GREAT HELP IF I HAD TO LIVE WITH BARBARA AND A WIFE, I WOULD NEVER GET ANY WORK DONE.
WHAT...? HOW COULD THIS, HAPPEN...?
PAPA, YOU PROMISED TO LET ME MARRY THE MAN I LOVE!

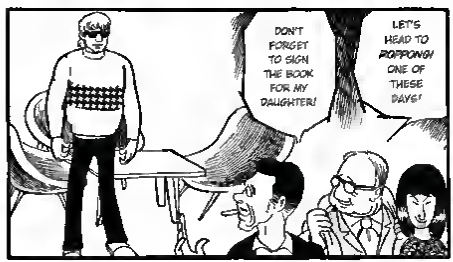
# Barbara ばるばら

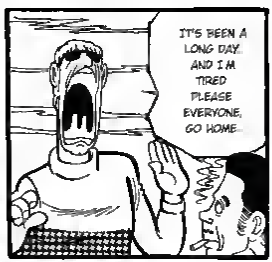
CHAPTER NINE

## A WORLD OF MADNESS


GIVE ME A BREAK... WHY DO THESE GOOD-FOR-NOTHINGS KEEP COMING TO MY HOUSE?

WELL, WHEN HIROYUKI YOTSUYA WAS TRAVELING IN THE SOVIET UNION...
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE UP GOLF AGAIN?
YOU KNOW, HEMINGWAY SAID THAT A FINISHED BOOK IS LIKE A LION KILLED


DON'T FORGET TO SIGN THE BOOK FOR MY DAUGHTER!
LET'S HEAD TO ROPPONGI ONE OF THESE DAYS!


IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY. AND I M TIRED PLEASE EVERYONE, GO HOME.

EVEN PEOPLE I BARELY KNOW ARE INVADING MY HOME TO GAWK!
OH SILENCE, DEAREST LOVE
PHEW
IT'S LIKE A CIRCUS IN HERE! BUT YOU SHOULD BE PLEASED.
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT...
EXCUSE ME FOR BARGING IN!
HAHAHAHA! I CAN SEE YOU DESPERATELY NEED SOMEONE TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR HOME, SENSEI.
SHIIKAKO, CLEAN THIS PLACE UP!
MR. SATOMI, THERE'S A LIT CIGARETTE...
N-NO DON'T TROUBLE YOURSELF!

SHIKAKO PLEASE, I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT..
I'D LIKE TO READ YOUR BEST SELLER, SENSEI, BUT YOU KNOW I'VE HAD MY HANDS FULL WITH THIS EXTRAORDINARY SESSION...
IF YOU DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT, THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE...?
PLEASE, WHY NOT LET MY DAUGHTER HELP YOU OUT ONCE IN A WHILE? BAHAHAHA!
SENSEI, I, GONPACHIRO SATOMI, HAVE COME HERE TODAY TO ASK A FAVOR.
I DO HAVE ONE PRIVATE SECRETARY, THOUGH RIGHT NOW SHE'S ABSENT...
SERIOUSLY, WHO TAKES CARE OF YOUR DAY-TO-DAY NEEDS?
YOU KNOW THE TOKYO GOVERNOR'S ELECTION IS NEXT SPRING.
TRY TO GIVE ME HIS DAUGHTER AGAIN
HE'S JUST GOING TO...

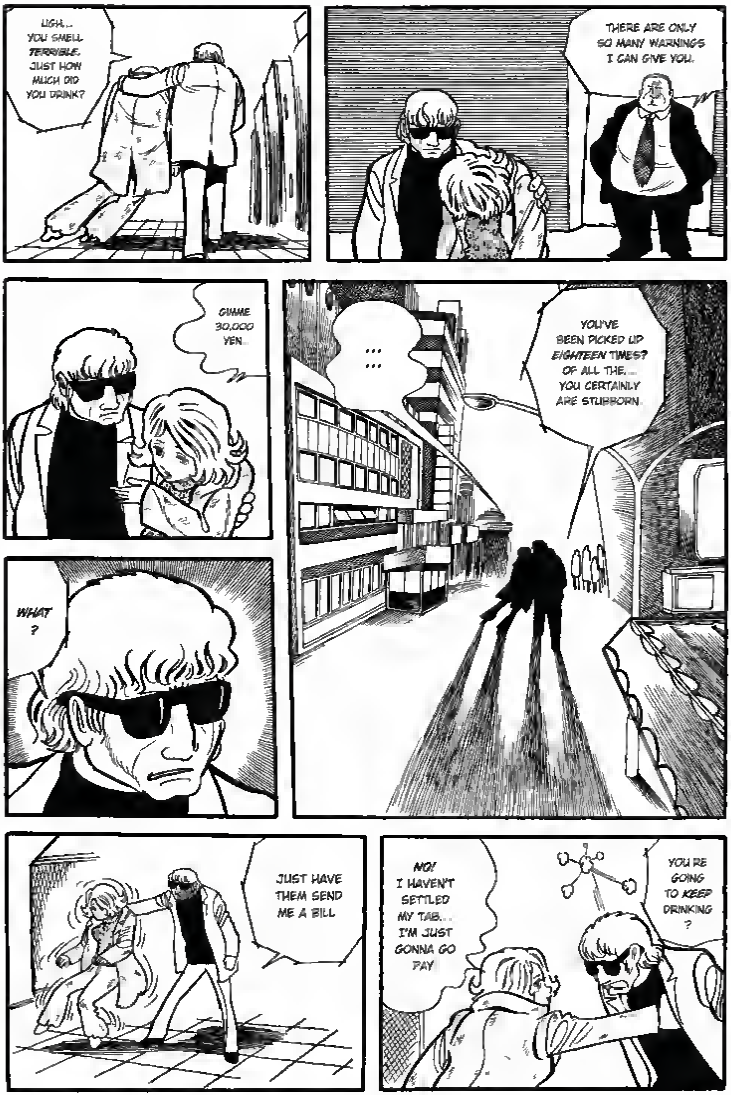
I SEE
WELL. I, GONPACHIRO SATOMI, WILL BE ANNOUNCING MY CANDIDACY
I WAS HOPING YOU'D BE THE PRESIDENT OF MY ELECTION COMMITTEE.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO CALM? TRY TO ACT A LITTLE SURPRISED!
SO. .?
IN OTHER WORDS, I NEED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR NAME!
YOUR SUPPORT FOR SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE GONPACHIRO SATOMI WILL BENEFIT TEN MILLION TOKYOITES.
A VOICE AS INFLUENTIAL AS YOURS WOULD BE THE EQUIVALENT OF A MILLION LOYAL TROOPS!
ELECTION COMMITTEE?! I WILL HELP IN ANY WAY I CAN, BUT PRESIDENT... THERE MUST BE OTHERS MORE POLITICALLY SAVVY THAN ME!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS.
SOMEONE ELSE TRYING TO USE MY REPUTATION

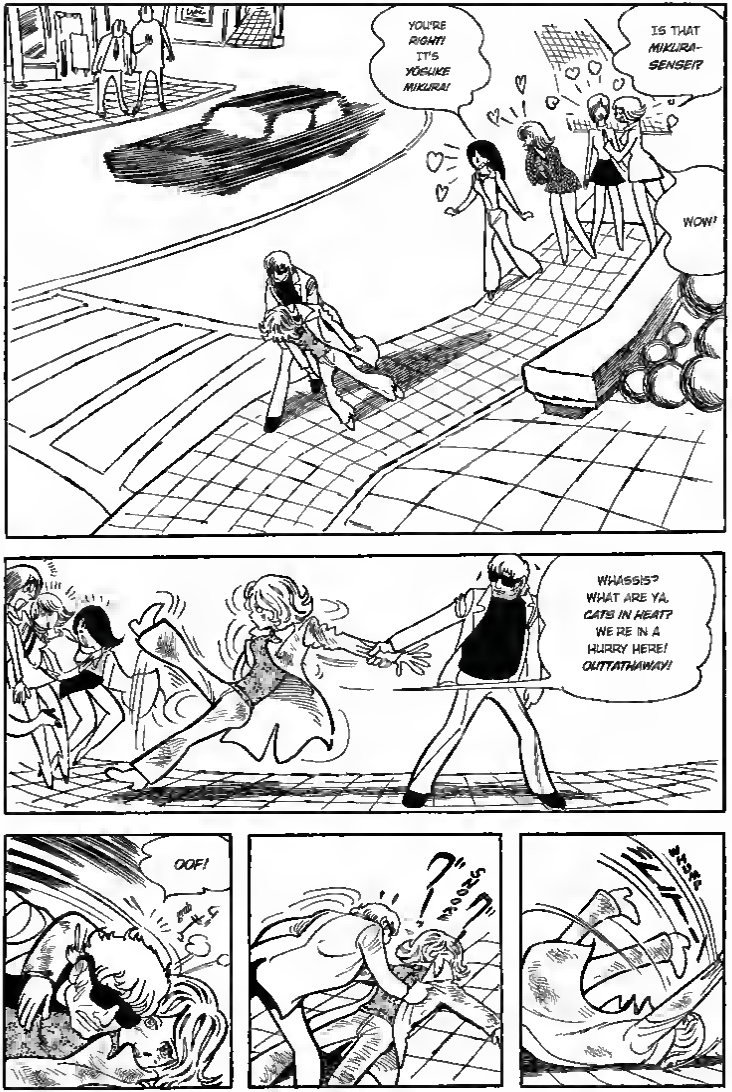
PLEASE, YOU DON'T NEED TO BOW TO ME...
THIS IS A PRIVATE VISIT, BUT SOON THERE WILL BE A REQUEST FROM THE PARTY— NO, THE PRIME MINISTER!
JUST YOUR NAME
I'LL BE FRANK. ELECTION COMMITTEE PRESIDENT!
CANDID... VERY WELL, SENSEI. YOU ARE A UNIVERSALLY RESPECTED MAN.
YOU DON'T NEED TO MINCE WORDS. PLEASE BE CANDID WITH ME.
MR. SATOMI, YOU WERE BORN IN THE SAME TOWN AS MY FATHER.
MY SECRETARY HAS.
WHAT?! Y-YES, I'LL BE THERE RIGHT AWAY!
BEEEP-BEEP
BEEN ARRESTED FOR ASSAULT!
HELLO... WHAT? UENO POLICE STATION?

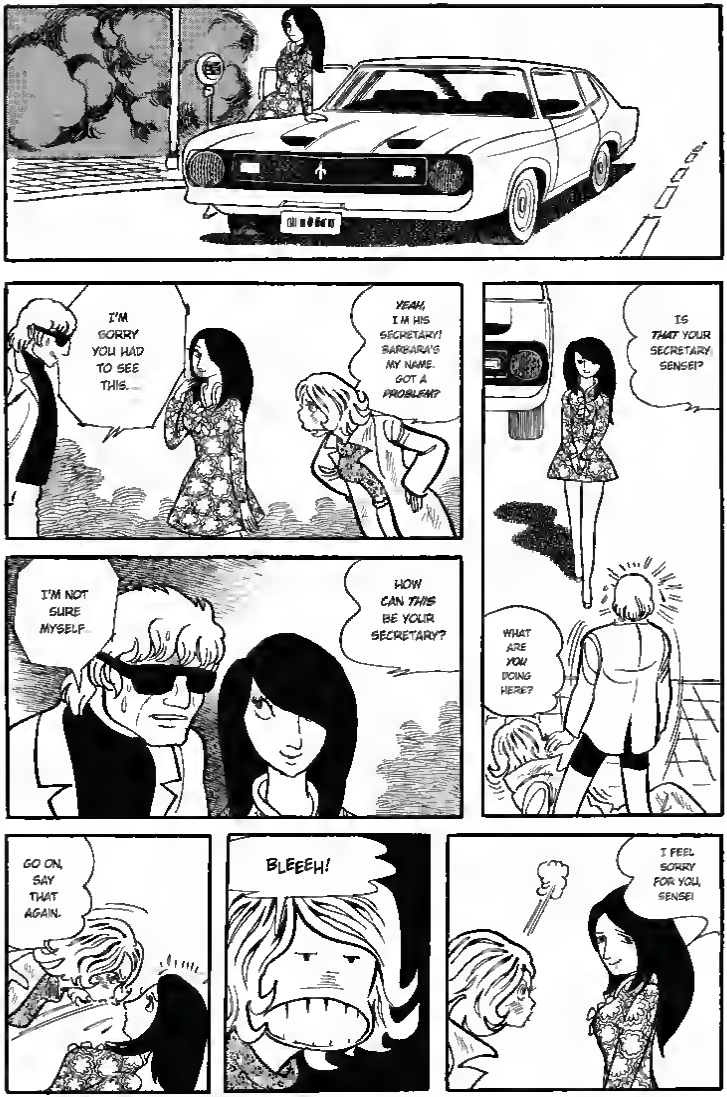
SENSEI, IF I COULD PLEASE GET YOUR ANSWER...
PLEASE FORGIVE ME, I HAVE TO GO
I'LL BE FINE!
SACHIKO, GET MR. MIKURA'S CLOTHES READY
GO HOME... PLEASE GO! I'VE GOT A... I AM... SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH MY HEAD!
SLAM

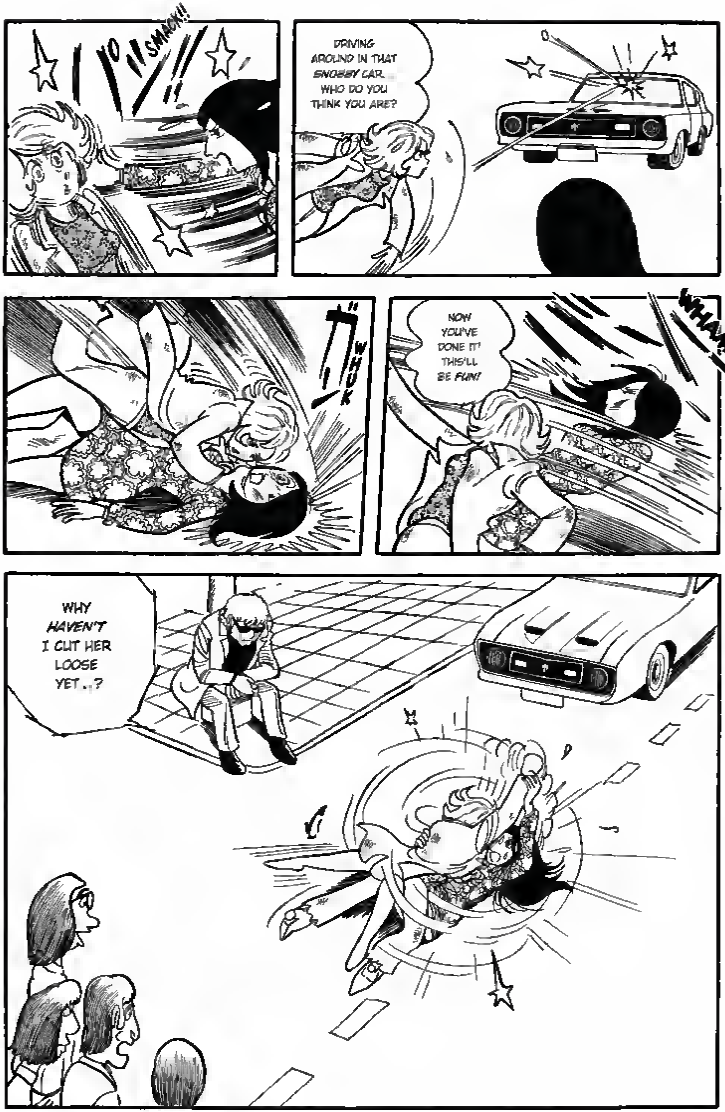
MR. MIKURA, I AM A GREAT FAN OF YOUR BOOKS, BUT I AM WORRIED ABOUT THE HARM THIS MIGHT DO TO YOUR REPUTATION.
YES.
YOU ARE THE AUTHOR, YŌSUKE MIKURA?
WELL, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
IS THAT WOMAN BARBARA REALLY YOUR SECRETARY?
SO SHE'S A HOBO?
YOU MUST CUT TIES WITH HER IMMEDIATELY.
IN ANY CASE
I DIDN'T I MEAN, SHE JUST MOVED IN WITH ME
WHY WOULD A MAN AS ESTEEMED AS YOURSELF TAKE IN A WOMAN LIKE THAT?

PLEASE SIGN HERE
I'LL GO CALL HER IN..
IN ANY CASE, I'M WARNING YOU AS HER GUARDIAN, YOU MUST BRING HER TO HEEL.
SHE WENT ON A RAMPAGE WITH SOME DRUNKEN STUDENTS AND STOLE FROM A DEPARTMENT STORE
SHE'S ALREADY BEEN IN CUSTODY EIGHTEEN TIMES AT THIS STATION ALONE MOST OF THEM WERE MINOR OFFENSES, BUT THIS IS ASSAULT. SHE'S NOTHING BUT A THUG.
BARBARA! THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE!
CLANK
SLAM

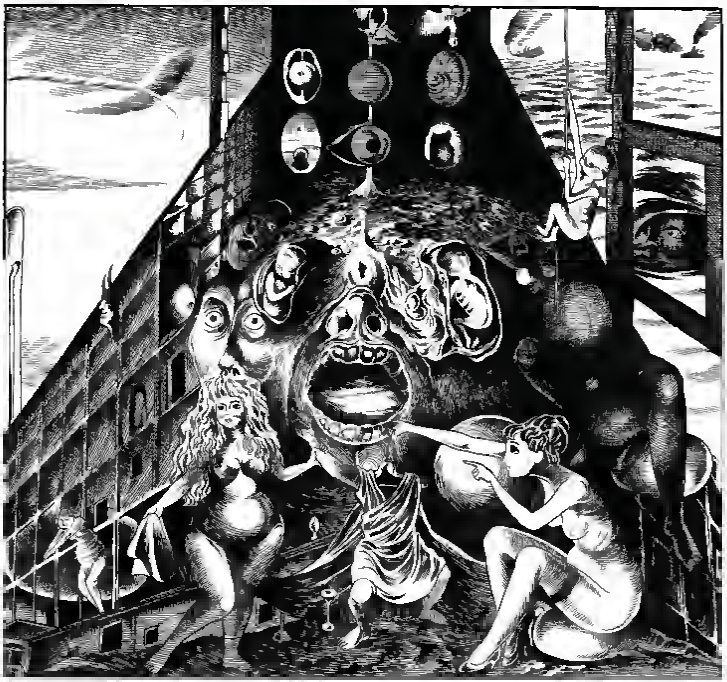

UGH... YOU SMELL, *TERRIBLE*. JUST HOW MUCH DID YOU DRINK?
THERE ARE ONLY SO MANY WARNINGS I CAN GIVE YOU.
GIMME 30,000 YEN.
...
...
YOU'VE BEEN PICKED UP *EIGHTEEN TIMES*? OF ALL THE... YOU CERTAINLY ARE STUBBORN.
*WHAT* ?
JUST HAVE THEM SEND ME A BILL
*NO!* I HAVEN'T SETTLED MY TAB... I'M JUST GONNA GO PAY
YOU'RE GOING TO *KEEP* DRINKING ?

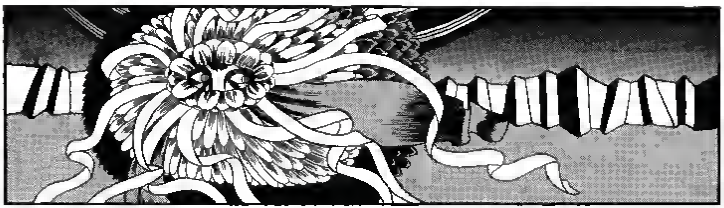

YOU'RE RIGHT! IT'S YOSUKE MIKURA!
IS THAT MIKURA-SENSEI?
WOW!
WHASSIS? WHAT ARE YA, CATS IN HEAT? WE'RE IN A HURRY HERE! OUTTATHAWAY!
OOF!
SMOOCH
?!

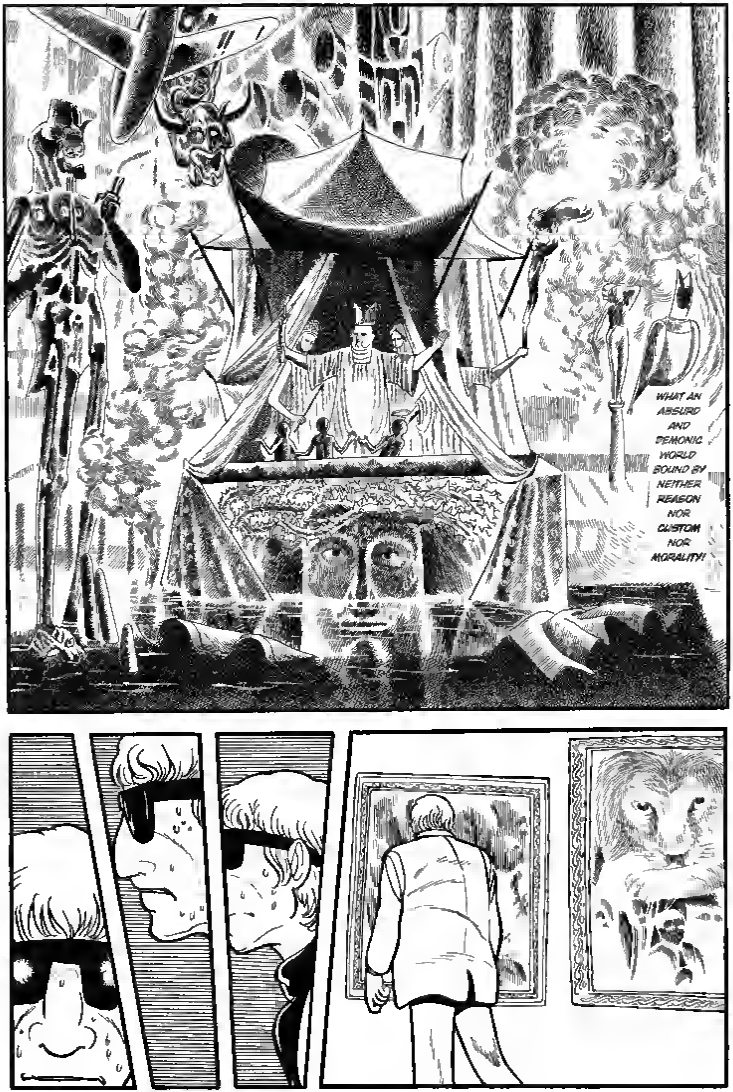

I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO SEE THIS...
YEAH, I'M HIS SECRETARY! BARBARA'S MY NAME. GOT A PROBLEM?
IS THAT YOUR SECRETARY, SENSEI?
I'M NOT SURE MYSELF...
HOW CAN THIS BE YOUR SECRETARY?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
GO ON, SAY THAT AGAIN.
BLEEEH!
I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU, SENSEI


SMASH!!
DRIVING AROUND IN THAT SNOBBY CAR... WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?
THUNK
NOW YOU'VE DONE IT! THIS'LL BE FUN!
WHAM!
WHY HAVEN'T I CUT HER LOOSE YET..?

IT'S TOO MUCH.
BADUM
AACK
WHUNK
NNGH
CLATTER
EEK
IN A DAZE, I WANDERED TOWARD THE MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART STRANGELY. THERE WERE NO CROWDS, PERHAPS BECAUSE IT WAS A WEEKDAY AFTERNOON
MOSAKU KEN (PHANTASY-HEORIA



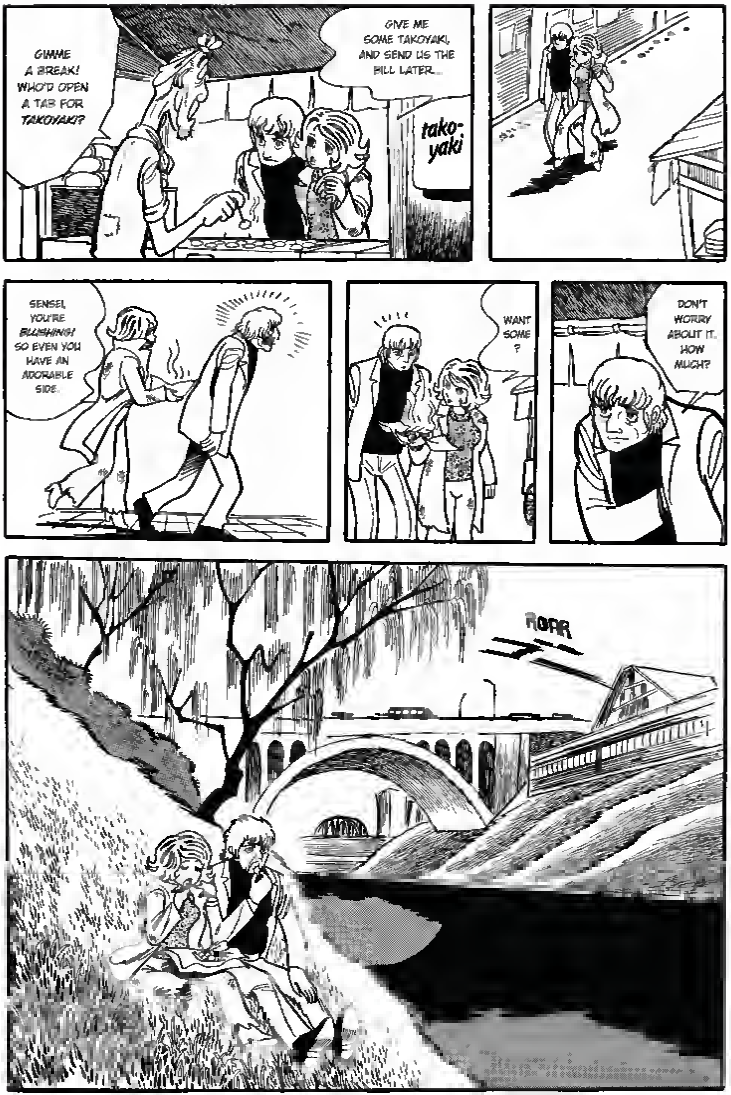



WHAT AN ABSURD AND DEMONIC WORLD BOUND BY NEITHER REASON NOR CUSTOM NOR MORALITY!

IT WAS A WORLD OF MADNESS! REALIZING THAT FELT SOMEHOW NOSTALGIC AND FAMILIAR.
THIS IS WHAT I LONGED FOR!
NIETZSCHE SAID THE EARTH IS DISEASED!
AND ONE OF THOSE DISEASES IS HUMANITY!
SHOOT!!

OUT OF MY WAY, BARBARA!
STOP, SENSEI!
LET GO OF ME!
WHAT IF THE MUSEUM BURNS DOWN?!
YOU LITTLE MEDDLER, I'LL KILL YOU!!
WAH!
CLANK
WHY DO I HAVE TO DIE? FOR WHAT?

DA-THWACK
I-I THINK I'M ALL RIGHT.
DID YOU BREAK ANY BONES SENSEI?
MODERN WESTERN PHANTASMAGORIA
I GUESS THE TABLES HAVE BEEN TURNED, BARBARA.
I'VE FINALLY DISCOVERED WHY I KEEP YOU AROUND HEH HEH HEH...
THUD
CLATTER


GIMME A BREAK! WHO'D OPEN A TAB FOR TAKOYAKI?
GIVE ME SOME TAKOYAKI, AND SEND US THE BILL LATER...
tako-yaki
SENSEI, YOU'RE BLUSHING! SO EVEN YOU HAVE AN ADORABLE SIDE.
WANT SOME ?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. HOW MUCH?
ROAR

# Barbara ばるばら

CHAPTER TEN:
## VOODOO